

New York Theatre Critics' Reviews 1947

Volume VIII, Number 1

Rachel W. Coffin, Editor

Week of February 3, 1947

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NEW YORK DAILY NEWS	NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM
NEW YORK MIRROR	NEW YORK NEWSPAPER PM
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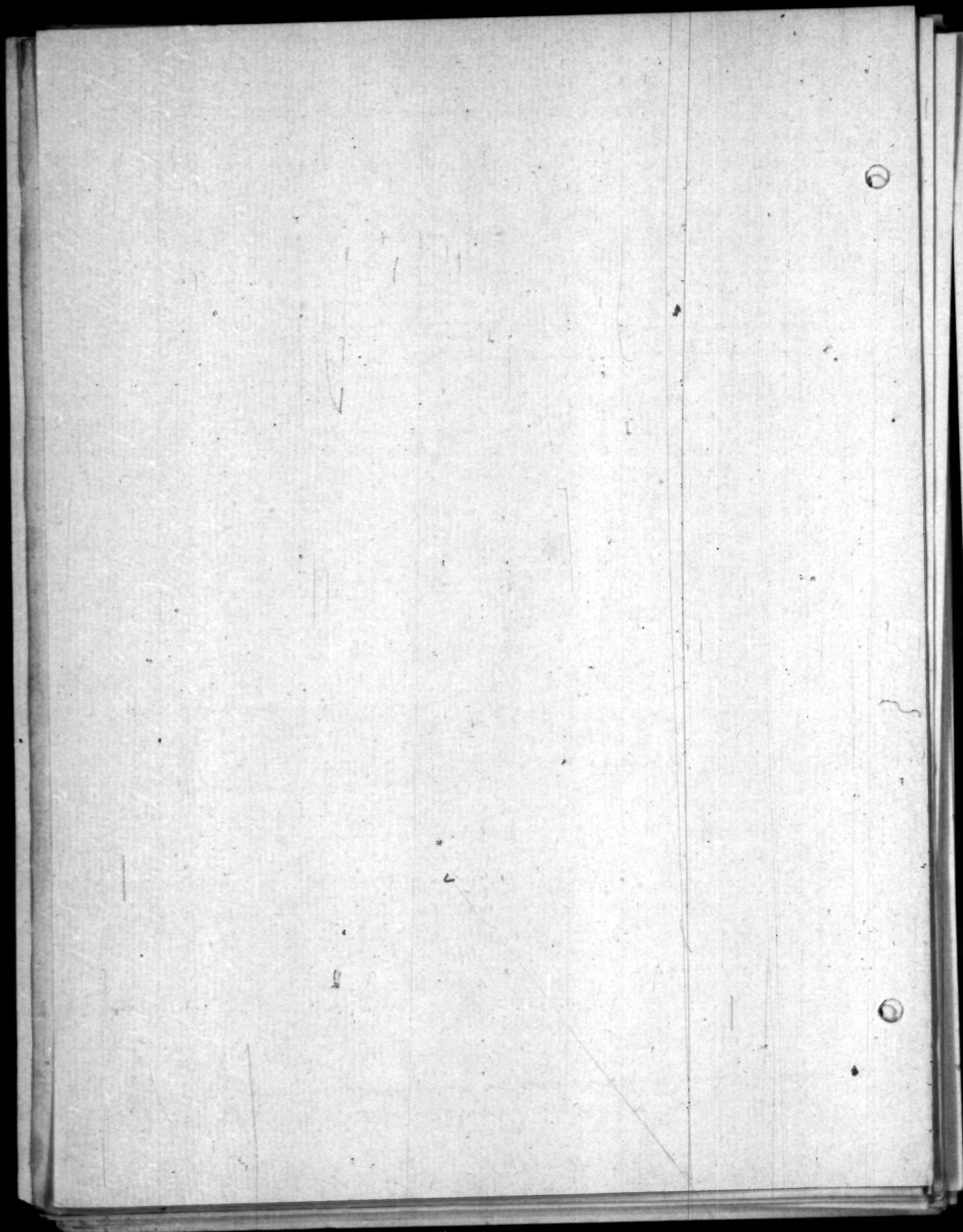
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"All My Sons"

The New York Times

JANUARY 30, 1947

Arthur Miller's "All My Sons"
Brings Genuine New Talent
Into the Coronet Theatre With
Expert Cast of Actors

By BROOKS ATKINSON

With the production of "All My Sons," at the Coronet last evening, the theatre has acquired a genuine new talent. Arthur Miller, who wrote "The Man Who Had All the Luck" in 1944, brings something fresh and exciting into the drama. He has written an honest, forceful drama about a group of people caught up in a monstrous swindle that has caused the death of twenty-one Army pilots because of defectively manufactured cylinder heads.

Told against the single setting of an ordinary American backyard, it is a pitiless analysis of character that gathers momentum all evening and concludes with both logic and dramatic impact.

Mr. Miller's talent is many-sided. Writing pithy yet unselfconscious dialogue, he has created his char-

acters vividly, plucking them out of the run of American society, but presenting them as individuals with hearts and minds of their own. He is also a skillful technician. His drama is a piece of expert dramatic construction. Mr. Miller has woven his characters into a tangle of plot that springs naturally out of the circumstances of life today. Having set the stage, he drives the play along by natural crescendo to a startling and terrifying climax.

Fortunately, "All My Sons" is produced and directed by people who value it and who have given it a taut and pulsing performance with actors of sharp and knowing intelligence. It is always gratifying to see old hands succeed in the theatre. But there is something uncommonly exhilarating in the spectacle of a new writer bringing unusual gifts to the theatre under the sponsorship of a director with taste and enthusiasm. In the present instance, the director is ELIA KAZAN.

"All My Sons" is the drama of one crucial day in the life of the Kellers, who live "on the outskirts of an American town." It is Sunday. Mr. Keller and his neighbors are beginning the day languidly in good humor. But their family life is swept with hidden currents of anguish and misgivings. Although Joe Keller and his son, Chris, know that the second son, Larry, will never return from the war, Mr. Keller is neurotically convincing herself that Larry is not dead.

Chris wants to marry the girl to whom Larry was engaged.

That seems to have nothing against it except loyalties that ought to be dead. But presently it develops that the great horror that is hanging over the Keller family is the suspicion that Joe Keller has escaped a jail conviction for fraudulent manufacturing by making his innocent partner the scapegoat. The suspicion develops into a fact. In some skillful dramatic construction which may, indeed, be a trifle too skillful for spontaneity, Mr. Miller involves everyone in this spiritual torture and uncertainty. He has also managed to relate the particular tragedy to the whole tragedy of the war years.

For scenery, Mordecai Gorelik has designed an attractive, sunny backyard with a life of its own. In three acts that carry the play over into the darkness of the next day, the actors are giving a brilliant performance. Beth Merrill as the neurotic and tired mother gives the impression of an inner strength that dominates at least one corner of the crisis.

As Joe Keller, Ed Begley dramatizes the whole course of the father's poignant ordeal without losing the basic coarseness of the character. As the son, Arthur Kennedy is giving a superb performance with great power for the climaxes and with insight into the progress of the character.

Lois Wheeler acts the part of the neighbor's daughter with candor, youthfulness and passion,

'ALL MY SONS.'

Play by Arthur Miller; staged by Elia Kazan; designed and lighted by Mordecai Gorelik; costumes by Paul Morrison; presented by Harold Clurman, Elia Kazan and Walter Fried, in association with Herbert H. Harris. At the Coronet Theatre, Wednesday evening, January 29, 1947. The cast:

Joe Keller	Ed Begley
Dr. Jim Bayliss	John McGovern
Frank Lohy	Dudley Sadler
Sue Bayliss	Peggy Meredith
Lydia Lohy	Hope Cameron
Chris Keller	Arthur Kennedy
Bert	Eugene Steiner
Late Keller	Beth Merrill
Ann Deever	Lois Wheeler
George Deever	Karl Malden

STORYLINE: Act I—The back yard of the Keller home, on the outskirts of an American town, is struck Sunday morning. Act II—Twilight that evening. Act III—Two o'clock the following morning.

thoroughly aware of the growth of her character. As the son of the scapegoat, Karl Malden is ably conveying the confusion and horror of a weak young man plunged into a situation he can hardly understand. There are excellent performers in other parts by John McGovern, Peggy Meredith, Dudley Sadler, Hope Cameron and Eugene Steiner.

In a performance with varying tone, rising pitch and dramatic design, they are acting an original play of superior quality by a playwright who knows his craft and has unusual understanding of the tangled loyalties of human beings.

New York World-Telegram

JANUARY 30, 1947

'All My Sons' a Tense Drama

By WILLIAM HAWKINS.

"All My Sons" is a play of high voltage, charged with things to say. No civilian, past or present, will find himself immune from its comment.

The play in its broadest sense demands a realization of the big interdependence of people. Specifically it tells the hideous lesson learned by a man who thought he could gamble with strange lives and benefit his own family.

The forces involved are intricate but tightly plotted. Joe Keller, proudly self-made, has been involved in a war scandal when his factory produced faulty parts which caused planes to crash.

Geis Partner Jailed.

He was exonerated at the cost of his former partner's imprisonment. Now the partner's daughter, Ann, wants to marry young Chris Keller, an idealist who cannot subscribe to his beloved father's

"practical" values.

Ann formerly had been engaged to Chris' brother, a flier reported missing three years earlier. It is Mrs. Keller's insistence that this boy will return which precipitates the action.

The older woman is a down-to-earth person, grown into a blurred mystic under the strain of the war years. She knows her husband is guilty of the old accusations. She feels that if Ann and Chris refuse to wait for the missing boy but admit his death, her husband will be shown responsible.

Ann's brother also tries to fight her marriage. But it is the struggle between the older and younger women which brings out the real truth about Keller and the missing son.

The play unfolds with unusual tenseness. The conflicts are vital, never simply black and white. The people are torn by the webs of

their relationship and can seldom take a clean-cut stand against each other.

Arthur Miller has written this forceful play in simple, clean, human speech. Poorly paraphrased, Chris' realization from the war is that unless you are conscious every time you ride in a car or eat a bite of food, that you owe a debt of gratitude to the dead, it is lost with blood on it.

This idea of inevitable relationship pursues the father to the end. He finally sees that not just the two Kellers, but all the boys were his sons.

An Expert Cast.

The cast is expert, and Elia Kazan gives the play intense reality with the emphasis of his staging. He keeps the action colorful, and realistically paces the natural speech of the script.

Beth Merrill is highly interesting

as the mother. She plays in a peculiar mental twilight so it is hard ever to know how much she really believes in the myth of her son's being alive.

The character is sympathetic only in a negative way, as Miss Merrill reveals her motives based on dependence rather than morale.

Arthur Kennedy is splendid as Chris. There is no brilliance about the boy, but a spiritual substance which the actor projects unerringly in the rare moments when deep beliefs make him articulate.

Sure Range of Emotions.

Ed Begley brings a wide, sure range of emotions to play on the factory owner. He moves from complacency, through doubt to a terrible perception of his faulty terms with life, and makes the progression valid and intelligent.

Lois Wheeler is similarly authentic as Ann, and Karl Malden does a fine job of intricate characterization in the shorter part of her brother. Peggy Meredith strikes home in one of the showier small parts.

"All My Sons" is a play where the family, and the neighbors and the term "next door" are vital elements in everybody's picture. These are usual people with usual ambitions.

The strength of the play is its revelation that a wide horizon is becoming a necessity for intimate happiness.

"All My Sons"—continued

New York Post

JANUARY 30, 1947

A Striking but Uneven Drama About the Soldier's Return

By Richard Watts Jr.

Of "All My Sons" it can be said immediately that it is a drama of force and passion. These are no small attributes in the modern theatre, which is sometimes afraid of its own emotional strength. Furthermore, it has the courage of its climaxes, being perfectly willing to go in for honest theatrical emphasis whenever it feels called upon to do so. On all of these scores it and its playwright, Arthur Miller, deserve high commendation.

That it is likewise an extremely uneven play is hardly to be disputed. While some of it is powerful and inescapably impressive, other sections are clumsy and sometimes a trifle embarrassing, an understandable weakness in dramatic works which shoot fairly high. Indeed, "All My Sons" is overwrought, hysterical, over-plotted, and unwieldy, as well as impassioned and impressive.

It is not, I fear, a very good play or an entirely convincing

one, since its cargo of plot, characterization, symbolism and social crusading is too large and is piled up too clumsily for such a comparatively ramshackle dramatic vessel. Yet, for all its undoubted weaknesses it is a drama which is always to be respected and which often achieves scenes of a remarkable degree of theatrical excitement.

Violent Study

At this point it strikes me that it might be a good idea to say something of what "All My Sons" is about. In a few words, it is a bitter, intense and purposely violent study of postwar disillusion-

ment and despair. But it is disillusionment, not at the causes of war or the value of victory or the world's return to hatred and power politics, but at the fathers and mothers who stayed at home, profited unashamedly on global suffering and indulged in orgies of sentimentality over the heroism of their sons.

Specifically, it is the story of young Chris Keller, who comes back from the war to find that his brother is missing in action, his father has been tried but acquitted on the charge of making faulty airplanes that sent twenty-one pilots to their death, and that the father of his brother's fiancée is still in prison for the same offense. Knowing better in his heart, the son insists on believing in his father's innocence.

It is giving away no surprise climax to add that, even more specifically, it is the story of Chris' decision that he can lie to himself no longer; that his father is guilty and his mother's prized romantic conviction that her other son is alive comes from a refusal to admit that her husband could have killed him. It could not, and does not, come to a pleasant ending.

All of this, I repeat, is told hysterically and in terms of overwrought and feverish drama. If

there is something naive about it, also, that is not due to any naivete in the playwright's earnest conviction that youthful idealism should rise and strike down any such emergence of greed and social irresponsibility, but to the excess of plot and emotion almost smothering the central theme.

He has not always written his characters well, either, but they are ably played. There is a fine, quiet, emotionally impressive portrayal of the disillusioned soldier by Arthur Kennedy. Karl Malden brings a fine bitterness to the role of another unhappy ex-service man, and Ed Begley is strikingly convincing as the father. Among the women, Lois Wheeler is entirely believable as the dead filer's fiancée, and Beth Merrill is almost persuasive in the dubiously written part of the mother.

I wish that "All My Sons" had been more skillfully planned and written. It would have been a fine thing, too, if it were less overwrought and overburdened with plot. But it is, hard to escape the force of its climaxes and its earnestness, and there is also something to be said for its ability to be disturbing.

Journal American

JANUARY 30, 1947

'All My Sons' Bows At Coronet Theatre

By ROBERT GARLAND.

Harold Clurman and Elia Kazan, who took part in the production of "Truckline Cafe," have decided to give us theatre reporters a second chance to make good with them. Even if we still remain "unqualified, either by training or taste," to pass judgment on the Broadway drama, they last night joined forces with Walter Fried and Herbert Harris in the initial metropolitan exposure of "All My Sons," and invited us to come and see it.

I am glad the Messrs. Clurman and Kazan were persuaded by the Messrs. Fried and Harris to relax and let us bottle-neckers in. Had they not, I would have missed Arthur Miller's new play. And, missing it, I could not have told you of its aims, which are high, and their fulfillments, which are proficient. Young Mr. Miller, as working dramatist, has traveled on and upward since, in 1944, his "Man Who Had All the Luck," ran out of it.

That was "the new American play" in which a ballplayer, a cynic and a mink-rancher went off the beam together. On his own, without collaboration with the critic-baiting Messrs. Clurman and Kazan, or even the Mr. Fried, who has not been heard from, Mr. Harris brought it into the very showhouse where, last night, "All My Sons" was shown. There, at what was then the Forrest, it achieved four consecutive performances. And predictions of better plays to come...

Small wonder that, three years ago, we dog-housed play reviewers used "promising" in connection with the playwright Mr. Miller!

Something of Moment

If, unqualified by training or taste as they say we drama critics are, Harold Clurman and Elia Kazan do not resent my untrained and tasteless respect for Arthur Miller's second play, "All My Sons"

looks like a fine new tenant for the Coronet. It says something of moment about something of moment; it says it with controlled emotion and impressive skill. Frequently it is indignant, but always about the real and righteous things.

Especially about American munition-makers who, in time of war, are not particular about the perfection of their output. In "All My Sons" there are a father, who looks the other way when his factory turns out defective airplane parts, and his sons, who are pilots overseas. One of the two fails to return, which poses the question of a man's ultimate responsibility for his own actions, regardless of the effect on those near and dear to him.

Out of this urgent, thus immediate material, Arthur Miller has fashioned an engrossing play which, after a fumbling beginning, rises relentlessly to its denouement. There is, if Messrs. Clurman and Kazan will excuse me, an Ibsen-esque quality to the craftsman-ship of the rising young playwright's narrative. In "All My Sons" he creates his characters while they, in turn, create the post-World War II problems which stem honestly out of them...

And don't let anyone persuade you that Mr. Miller's play is "pro" or "anti" anything it should not be. It is not! It is even "pro" good theatre.

Actors Praised

Turning my lack of training and taste on Elia Kazan's as-

sured and, I would not be surprised, personally sympathetic direction, the godly company of players is of tremendous help to play and playwright. Mr. Kazan, if he will again excuse me, is at his directorial best in Arthur Miller's later and greater drama. He likes, I think, this problem piece even more than this voice from the doghouse. He has given it his directorial all.

Arthur Kennedy, an alumnus of the Group Theatre, the Evans Shakespeare and the moving-pictures, is a rising young actor worthy of the rising young playwright whose Chris Keller he flawlessly portrays. Ed Begley, as Chris's erring father, is a welcome refugee from radio. And Beth Merrill's portrait of Chris' unmoral mother is unflagging in its all-too-human matriarchy. Looking back on Miss Merrill's impersonation, it is bigger and better than it was while going on.

As designed by Mordecai Gorelik, the backyard of Joe Keller's home on the outskirts of almost any American town is an impressive setting for the impressive goings-on in Arthur Miller's impressive second play. Even if it hurts the producers more than it hurts me to say so, "All My Sons," as written by Arthur Miller and produced by Harold Clurman, Elia Kazan and Walter Fried, in association with Herbert Harris, is a new arrival to make the judicious playgoer rejoice...

Put it on your non-musical "must list," along with "State of the Union," "Born Yesterday" and "Another Part of the Forest."

"All My Sons"—continued

The Sun

JANUARY 30, 1947

'All My Sons,' Intelligent and Thoughtful Drama, Superbly Played at Coronet.

By WARD MOREHOUSE.

"All My Sons," put on last night at the Coronet, is a play to be welcomed and respected, one that has a great deal to say on the subject of responsibility in wartime, and one that says it vigorously. The author, the oncoming Arthur Miller, is a young dramatist who can put explosive force into his scenes.

This new drama begins somewhat exasperatingly. It is occasionally a fitful and spasmodic play, cluttered with many story threads and veering now and then from one sub-plot to another, but when it is concentrating on its main issue, which is the guilt of a wartime airplane parts manufacturer, the father of two sons,

it has extraordinary poignancy and power.

Playwright Miller saves his strongest material for his climax scene, that in which it is revealed that a young flyer, missing for more than three years, went to his death a suicide because of his conviction that it was a debt he owed to mankind and to his comrades in arms.

He had learned, just as his mother and neighbors back home already knew, that his father had brought instant death to twenty-one combat pilots because of the shipment of cracked cylinder heads for plane engines. In the final moments of the play the pitiful Joe Keller, devoted to his home and family, comes to realize the enormity of his offense, and he then takes the only course that is left to him.

"All My Sons," shrewdly and knowingly staged by the facile Elia Kazan, uses a back yard as its locale, an excellent setting by Mordecai Gorelik, reminiscent of "Morning's at Seven" and going all the way back to "The Little Gray Lady." The play says when it strives for comedy and its incidental characters are quite sketchy, but there is vibrance in the principal roles and a well-directed cast never lets the author down.

Arthur Kennedy gives a fine performance as the idealistic son, the one who comes back to learn the crushing truth. Ed Begley is hearty, pathetic and tragic by

turn as the manufacturer who was engaged in cutthroat wartime competition and who sought an excuse for his crime on the grounds of practicality. It is a thoroughly convincing portrayal, the Begley performance, and so is that of Beth Merrill, in the role of the mother, resolute for all those months in her belief that the missing son is alive. Lois Wheeler is affecting and believable and there is fiery playing from Karl Malden as the son of a weak man serving the jail term that should be Joe Keller's.

"All My Sons," brought forth by the new producing combination of Harold Clurman, Elia Kazan and Walter Fried, in association with Herbert H. Harris, is an intelligent and thoughtful drama. The over-all effect is one of force, an almost unendurable force, in many scenes. And in Miller the Broadway theater has a new playwright of enormous promise.

There are cheers from this corner today for Arthur Miller, and there will be work for him in the seasons that lie ahead.



JANUARY 31, 1947

Kronenberger

A Serious Theme Makes For Compelling Theater

PM Reviews

With his second Broadway play, Arthur Miller seems to me to stand easily first among our new generation of playwrights. This, to be sure, is not saying anything very tremendous, since almost none of our newest playwrights have any real standing at all. But what is striking about Mr. Miller is that he seems to stand apart from the others rather than merely a cut or two above them. It is not sheer writing that accounts for the difference. Harry Brown can write rings around him on the stage, and as a matter of fact the writing in *All My Sons* is fairly uneven. It is not quite sheer playwrighting either—though, on the whole, *All My Sons* is very effectively put together. It is rather that Mr. Miller has a personal intensity that charges what goes on with noticeable power; and that he has social and moral perceptions that permit his story to vibrate and expand. The really disappointing thing about most of our "promising" playwrights is the aw-

ful mediocrity of their minds, the too great simplicity of their aims. Mr. Miller is more interesting than they, so that even his faults seem more interesting. If *All My Sons* creates an effect of congestion, it is because it has some notion of complexity. If matters sometimes get overheated, it is because they are not born of cold calculation. Even what is unconvincing about his people is partly due to their not being cut from whole cloth.

But, faults or not, *All My Sons* is on the whole a compelling play. Mr. Miller has brought to it three things very vital to a serious stagework: he has a dramatic sense, he has a human sense, and he has a moral sense. And these things converge upon a situation in itself provocative. The story of *All My Sons* is not easy to tell; it has many—probably too many—strands which are only slowly woven together. But it concerns an airplane manufacturer who, with two sons in the war, had allowed defective parts to be shipped out and cause the death of

a score or more fliers. Joe Keller had, moreover, allowed his partner to go to prison for this act; and has convinced Chris, his surviving son, that he had no part in it. The other son, missing for three years, had been engaged to the partner's daughter. Now she and Chris want to marry, but the stumbling-block is Chris' mother, who refuses to admit that Larry is dead. We gradually see that her refusal is based on her knowledge of her husband's guilt; and in time the idealistic Chris also learns that his father is guilty. Upbraided and denounced, Keller—after agreeing to go to prison—kills himself.

Mr. Miller's approach to all this is not so simple as you might suppose. He is not just another playwright angrily shaking his fist at greed and unscrupulousness. Indeed, his tone, though passionate, is not at all polemical. He is dealing with the complex problem of human responsibility, and dealing with it in very human terms. He gets at men's morality through their psychology. Joe Keller has rationalized his misdeeds by a calous acceptance of the American gospel of "practicality"; and he has discounted any responsibility toward society by stressing his responsibility to his family—to seeing that it gets ahead in the world. And others, too, in the play are beset by guilts and divided loyalties, with the moral compromises that result from them. Far from creating any villains, Mr. Miller shows how close "villains" are to normally self-interested people.

Not cruelty and hate, but self-interest and even self-preservation, prove the greatest menaces to society—if only because they forge the most plausible sanctions for acting irresponsibly. More than at first it seems to, *All My Sons* slashes at all the defective parts of our social morality; but most of all, it slashes at the unsocial nature of family loyalties, of protecting or aggrandizing the tribe at the expense of society at large.

Mr. Miller does not formulate any of this intellectually. Far from it; once *All My Sons* gets going, it is completely theater. It is full of tensions, of keyed-up people, of big, hard-hitting climaxes. As a serious work, the play undoubtedly suffers from being too theatrical. But if Mr. Miller's personal intensity cannot save some of *All My Sons* from being high-pitched, it does keep it from seeming hollow. The more serious flaws of the play are some imperfect characterizations and rather needless minor characters, a rather too elaborate plot, and a certain amount of bad writing that Mr. Miller has let get by him.

But it remains a play of marked force, and it has been given a very good production. Mr. Kazan's staging retains the impact of the play, and at times supplies the modulation that it lacks. In the roles of the father, the mother and the son, Ed Begley, Beth Merrill and Arthur Kennedy are all highly effective—Mr. Kennedy in particular; and Lois Wheeler gives a good account of herself as the young girl. Mordecai Gorelik's backyard set is an additional virtue.

—LOUIS KRONENBERGER

PAGE 477

"All My Sons"—continued

NEW YORK
Herald Tribune

JANUARY 30, 1947

By HOWARD BARNES

Too Many Duds

ARTHUR MILLER has brought more indignation than craftsmanship to his play about a war profiteer's family, "All My Sons." The new offering at the Coronet Theatre flames fiercely on occasion. It has several performers to make the most of these incandescent moments, as a veteran discovers that his father has caused a score of flyers to be killed by manufacturing faulty parts. The fact remains that the skins of tragedy become hopelessly snarled before a third-act curtain. The

author has an acute feeling for the theater and a certain sense of form, but he has not blended them in a satisfactory drama.

His failure, perhaps, is in his very effort to superimpose a classical tragic outline on subject matter which is, at best, confused. The characters of "All My Sons" emerge with some authority, but instead of motivating dramatic events, they have a constant tendency to become puppets in the hands of an inexperienced string-puller. For a time the wife and mother of the work, played magnificently by Beth Merrill, holds a somber post-war fable in a rather relentless unity. Before the old man puts a bullet in his head after learning that a son missing in action was certain of his guilt and went on a mission to nowhere, the

offering merely stammers to a climax.

"All My Sons" deals with stern truths, and they are frequently given vivid statement at the Coronet. When Arthur Kennedy, giving a staunch portrayal of the son who returned from the war, compares the affection of men who fight together against a background of honor with the complacency of "practical" civilians on the home front, the work has both emotional power and eloquence. Both of these qualities drain out of the production in contrived situations and dialogue which one is not likely to hear from those who were deeply and tragically involved in the war. Miller has chosen a tempting theme, but it is one which has already floored many of his playwrighting betters.

Miss Merrill and Kennedy carry the main theme of the work, with intonations of a mother-son fixation, lurking suspicions and considerable to-do about living lies. Ed Begley supports them ably as the grasping father, who beats a penitentiary sentence only to blow his brains out. Lois Wheeler is attractive as the shadowy heroine of the play, and Karl Malden has a splendid bit as her embittered brother, Elia Kazan, who is one of the sponsors of the production, has staged it no more artfully than the material deserved. Mordca Gorelik has given far greater assistance with his setting and lighting. "All My Sons" pulls few punches, but they are scattered badly around the stage of the Coronet.

Daily Mirror

JANUARY 30, 1947

'All My Sons' Not Very Convincing

By ROBERT COLEMAN

Arthur Miller has penned a grim indictment of war profiteers and selfish mothers in "All My Sons," which Harold Clurman, Elia Kazan and Walter Fried, in association with Herbert H. Harris, presented at the Coronet Theatre last night.

Chris Keller returned from war to discover that his father had been convicted and then, under suspicious circumstances, exonerated of selling defective airplane engine heads to the Army, and that his mother refused to believe another son dead, though

he had been officially reported missing in action for some three and a half years ago.

As if all this weren't enough to complicate unfortunate Chris' life, he had to go and become engaged to his dead brother's fiancée, who's father happened to

have been a partner in the firm manufacturing the defective engine heads before being sentenced to prison.

Matters came to a climax when Chris was convinced that his father, and not the partner, had been guilty of covering up the defects in the engine heads.

Father, rather than go to prison, shot himself. And Chris, despite his mother's hysterical protests, is determined to wed the girl of his choice.

Miller started with the materials for a gripping drama, but hasn't used them to best advantage. He has underwritten. He seldom succeeds in bringing his characters to life and their speech is stilted and choppy, failing to illuminate satisfactorily their actions.

The new producing firm has assembled an excellent cast, including Beth Merrill, Arthur Kennedy, Ed Begley, John McGovern, Dudley Sadler, Peggy Meredith, Hope Cameron, Lois

Wheeler and Karl Malden.

But only Kennedy and Begley, under Elia Kazan's pedestrian direction, are able to make their roles flame across the footlights.

Kazan has Miller's people move with a restrained deliberation that makes them often seem incredible and suggests the water torture to some playgoers. We just don't believe ordinary people can be so placid in the crises into which Miller plunges them.

And Miller's characters are ordinary people—the Kellers, their neighbors and their enemies—when they are not serving as stained glass symbols, which was a little too often for us.

Though many first nighters remained after the curtain to give "All My Sons" an ovation, the play left us cold except for the rare intervals when Kennedy, aided by Begley, was able to spark it into dramatic fire. Which was too seldom for a hit.

DAILY NEWS

JANUARY 30, 1947

A Lot Goes On but Little Happens In Backyard Drama, 'All My Sons'

By JOHN CHAPMAN

In 1944 Arthur Miller wrote a play, "The Man Who Had All the Luck," which was nothing much as cohesive, progressive drama but which had considerable quality in the writing.

His people talked and acted like people. Now Mr. Miller has come forth with a drama, "All My

Sons," which was presented at the Coronet Theatre last evening, and

the same can be said of it.

In "All My Sons" Mr. Miller considers the postwar status of a tough-minded war manufacturer. He can't have been a big shot, this fellow, for apparently he lives in the back yard of a house on a 40-foot lot; yet he made airplane engine cylinder heads and deliber-

ately let some faulty ones go through. Now, in the play, he has to pay up.

Mr. Miller has put a great deal of high-temperature drama into his piece and under the direction of Elia Kazan a good cast treats it with a degree of competence. The higher the temperature of the drama the cooler is the playing of the company, and this kind of understatement always is theatrically effective.

Nevertheless, I experienced a disturbing lack of interest in the many affairs which were going on in one small back yard. I admired Ed Begley as the manufacturer, Beth Merrill as his wife, Arthur Kennedy as his son and all the other inhabitants of a patch of ground nicely designed by Mordca Gorelik. But long before they got through talking and Mr. Begley had shot himself I was ready to go home.

"Sweethearts"

The Sun

JANUARY 22, 1947

'Sweethearts' Is Stodgy and Old-fashioned, Even Bobby Clark Can't Save It.

By WARD MOREHOUSE.

"Sweethearts" bustled in from its travels last night, bringing along the capering Bobby Clark and a Victor Herbert score, but it's a show without the charm of "The Red Mill," which it has ousted from the Shubert. The new production must be put down as one of the theater's minor blessings.

But the madcap Bobby Clark is immense. Here he is, back again with his painted-on eyeglasses and his quicksilver cigar, his leers and his grimaces. He spurts and canters and gallops; he paws the stage as he chortles and snorts, just as he has been doing ever since the late Paul McCullough used to follow him around in a great racoon coat.

They've given Bobby a few good lines here and there, but he puts hard work and something of

a demoniacal frenzy into his tomfoolery. He is at his funniest when he is working in woman's garb at a washing machine and deftly tossing garments onto a second-story clothesline, and when he enters dragging a two-wheeled cart, steps downstage and asks the audience: "Pardon me, but did anybody see a horse come down this aisle?"

The libretto—the original book (1913) by the hardy Harry B. Smith and Fred De Gresac has been subjected to considerable revision by John Cecil Holm—is a pretty feeble affair, but "Sweet-

hearts" is particularly disappointing in its company and in its score, certainly far from Victor Herbert's best. Everything is all right, however, when the melodious "Sweethearts" is being sung, and "I Might Be Your Once-in-a-While" is still one of the Irish conductor-composer's most delightful numbers.

The players assembled by Paula Stone, who did us such a service with "The Red Mill," and Michael Sloane as co-workers with the nimble and tireless Bobby Clark are generally unexciting, although June Knight and Gloria Story are pleasant enough and Marjorie Gateson strives to give the star a hand in his absurdities.

Notwithstanding its assets—(1) the antic Clark and (2) two or three Herbert tunes—"Sweethearts" comes forth as a stodgy and old-fashioned piece, lumbering and wearisome for a lot of the way.

Broadway's song-and-dance department, which has come to life lately, slipped back quite a bit last night in Shubert Alley.

"SWEETHEARTS"

Victor Herbert's operetta; original book by Harry B. Smith and Fred De Gresac; lyrics by Robert B. Smith; production staged by John Kennedy; musical arrangements by Russell Bennett; book revisions by John Cecil Holm; ensembles by Catherine Littlefield; scenery by Peter Wolf; choreography by Theodore Adolphus; vocal direction by Theodore Adolphus; vocal direction by Theodore Adolphus; costumes by Michael Lopy; musical director, Edwin MacArthur; presented by Paula Stone and Michael Sloane at the Shubert Theatre, Tuesday evening, January 21, 1947. The cast:

Daughters:

Dorcas	Martha James
Corinne	Nancy Franklin
Ellen	Janet Medina
Pauline	Betty Ann Bosch
Kathleen	Martha Emma Watson
Nadine	Gloria Lind
Gracien	Eva Salomon
Wilde	Muriel Bruns
Lieut. Karl	Robert Shactson
Came Lucy	Marjorie Gateson
Peasants:	Rayner Howell
Liane	June Knight
Miss Mikolova	Bobby Clark
Sylvia	Gloria Story
Prince Franz	Mark Dawson
Peter	Richard Basson
Hans	Ken Arnold
Baron Petrus von Tromp	Paul Best
Miss Butterfield Blingby	Anthony Kemble-Cooper
Prima Ballerina	John Anania
Adolphus	Connel MacNeil
Homborg	Richard Basson
Ambassadors	Louise De Mangus
Captain Laurence	Tom Perkins

SYNOPSIS: Act I: Village Square in Ziliana. Act II: The Palace.

New York Post

JANUARY 22, 1947

Bobby Clark Has His Triumph, Even if 'Sweethearts' Hasn't

By Richard Watts Jr.

Although the death of the incomparable W. C. Fields ended the era of the mythological comic giants, American comedy is still in good hands. For Bobby Clark happily continues to be healthy, vigorous and, to put it in one word, magnificent. At the Shubert Theatre last night, where they are putting on a hopeful revival of Victor Herbert's "Sweethearts," the wonderful and legitimate heir to a great tradition was faced with the severest test of his lifetime, and he came through miraculously, even if his vehicle didn't.

There never was such a job of giving one's all to the cause of entertainment as the dauntless Mr. Clark displayed before the grateful and adoring first-nighters. He changed odd costumes, grimaced, darted about, sang, danced, commented with some asperity on the plot in which he was

entangled, remembered a line from his own recent version of "The Would-Be Gentleman," made bad lines bearable and fair ones hilarious, and refused to be let off anything. The result was a display of comic virtuosity that was nothing short of epic.

Since it is not altogether pleasant to think of the revived "Sweethearts" even with the mighty Mr. Clark, strong minds totter at the thought of it without him. Although the score doesn't continue to hold its spell as delightfully as does that of "The Red Mill," several of the Master's songs, in particular the title number, a comic sextet called "Pilgrims of Love"

and the gay "I Might Be Yours Once-in-a-While," are still memorably tuneful, but that is about all of value which remains in "Sweethearts."

Another Epoch

At first there is something beguilingly nostalgic in the bright mythical-kingdom costumes, the dragons and the village maidens, the rousing choruses and the hearty stage laughter, and all the other paraphernalia of the musical show of a conceivably more gracious epoch. Soon, however, the book begins to loom menacingly, and then you start to realize that there is quite a bit to be said for the modern girl-and-music extravaganza.

If you asked me to tell you in detail just what is wrong with the plot of "Sweethearts," as revised by John Cecil Holm, I would have to confess my inability to do so. The truth is that, with all the goodwill in the world, I found myself unable to make head or tail of it. To the best of my knowledge, it had to do with which stepdaughter was the heir to some throne, but it was certainly vague, confusing and prodigiously uninteresting. It also got in Mr. Clark's way.

Let any modern upstart look upon the idiocy of plot to be found in "Sweethearts" as proof of the pathetic naivete of the

age of Victor Herbert. It should be remembered that even in his heyday critics used to complain that the great composer never could find a librettist worthy of him. It can only be added that he isn't any better served today by the unfortunates who try to revise the questionable books Harry B. Smith was accustomed to think up for the music master.

By Conquest

The dances and the choruses of the present production are lively and colorful enough, and in supporting roles June Knight and Marjorie Gateson remind us, as they have frequently done in the past, that they know their way around in musical comedy. But, as I seem to have hinted, the show belongs exclusively to Bobby Clark, by right of conquest.

It is frantically unnecessary to tell any one who ever saw him how brilliantly he can disport himself in such a predicament as "Sweethearts" offers. His rare talent for being at the same time leering and innocent, ferocious and sweet, energetic and effortless, while he goes about the tremendous business of making a great deal out of nothing at all with frantic nonchalance, is superbly demonstrated. "Sweethearts" may be a disappointment, but Bobby Clark is a delight.

"Sweethearts"—continued

DAILY NEWS

JANUARY 22, 1947

Lunatic Bobby Clark The One Sweetheart In New 'Sweethearts'

By JOHN CHAPMAN

Bobby Clark is the funniest man of his age and weight in show business—and perhaps the strongest. On those buckling knees, on that low-hung backside, he can carry a show farther

than a Pennsylvania freight car. He almost carries the revision of Victor Herbert's "Sweethearts," which was presented last evening at the Shubert Theatre. Atlas and the entire Santini family could do no more.

"Sweethearts" is largely a case of waiting for Bobby. Luckily he appears as soon as the Singing En-

semble ends its full-throated work on a number titled "On Parade." He enters with a clashing cane, a steaming cigar and zany leer. In a moment he utters a line addressed to no one in particular, then apologizes: "Pardon me for talking to myself. It's an old operetta custom."

From there on he talks to himself and the audience a great deal, giving the plot of "Sweethearts" a brisk roughing-up. Once on alight pretext he appears hauling a cart and, looking into the auditorium, queries, "Did anybody see a horse going up this aisle?"

On even slighter pretext Mr. Clark will come on in a new costume—French Foreign Legion, washwoman, wooden-shoe Dutchman, royal courtier or monk. Thanks to the outrageous antics of Bobby, the final number, in which he and five other monks do a sextet titled "Pilgrims of Love," is a high spot of the show.

A Revised Version.

"Sweethearts" itself has undergone some book revision by John Cecil Holm. Not having seen the original by Harry B. Smith and Fred de Gresac, I can't tell just what the revisions have been, but I imagine they include one or two good jokes about politics and possibly a change here and there to fit the characters to the company whom Bobby surrounds.

"Sweethearts" still looks like an

antique, with flat lighting, brightly colored flat scenery and brightly colored flat costumes (except those filled by June Knight). The events occur in the country of Zilania, which is tired of being a republic and wants to become a kingdom again. The prince assumes the throne, the founding heroine is revealed as a princess and all events are maneuvered by the prime minister, name of Clark.

The songs are familiar, natch. Among the singers the men fare better than the women with Robert Shackleton and Mark Dawson in full voice. Anthony Kemble-Cooper and Paul Best play English and Dutch comics, respectively. Miss Knight is in considerable evidence as a hip-twitching milliner, and Gloria Story sings "Sweethearts" with more modesty than effect.

Marjorie Gatenon, in the role of a laundress of whom Clark is enamored, is the only one who is a match for Bobby's ebullience. She plays a hokum part with the proper approach. But Clark is the sweetheart of "Sweethearts." How wonderful he would be in a new show!

New York World-Telegram

DAY, JANUARY 22, 1947.

Bobby Clark's Antics Spark 'Sweethearts'

By WILLIAM HAWKINS.

One glance at the billing: Bobby Clark in Victor Herbert's "Sweethearts," ought to tell nine out of 10 theatergoers just what they are going to get. They will not be disappointed.

Here is a king clown turned loose in the old-fashioned myth, surrounded by lovely songs poured out by lusty voices. This setup is padded with lots of girls, bright costumes and a full quota of dancing.

The story of "Sweethearts" has served every form of theater from grand opera to bedroom farce. It is the one about babies being switched at birth.

In this case it serves chiefly to get Clark on the stage and keep him there not as much as you might like. There is a distinct feeling that most of his lines are the product of his own imagination. The rest of the uproar he evokes comes from his reading, or his astonishing behavior.

Hilarious Nonsense.

His disguises range from that of a washwoman through a soldier of the Foreign Legion to a monk. He has a genius for making the mere nonsense of changing his clothes hilarious.

Clark's first entrance, as he frantically kisses the six girls who are not his daughters, shakes the audience with mirth. He tosses laundry to a line on the roof, and proudly scrubs his teeth with cigar ashes.

He conducts a male choir with idiotic intensity. And he blows the roof off the house with his mad miming of a song about pilgrims of love. It is a triumph of efficient absurdity.

One inevitable result of having such a character as Clark around is that the other players look labored. To compete with his sany energy is to fall flat on your face. Salvation lies in feeding him lines and keeping out of his cyclonic way.

Makes a Pert Foil.

Marjorie Gatenon, who plays as well opposite him as anybody could, makes a pert foil. She reads lines at a bright clip with no pretense that they are rare wit. And she moves with a neat style that dresses up the show.

The dialogue, old and new, is enough to defeat anyone who does not race through it and the story involving royalty and laundress was never meant for comprehension.

The first act treats it as a vehicle for Bobby Clark and melodies, keeping the variety of stage levels teeming with motion. The second act, for all its brilliant uniforms, begins statically by comparison.

June Knight picks things up with a bright dance and just before the end Clark and his fellow monks exhaust themselves and the palms of the audience's hands with their pilgrim song.

Gloria Story and Mark Dawson are a handsome pair of romantic leads and they have the voices to make the most of the fine old songs. Robert Shackleton similarly gives an uncompromising vocal treatment to the familiar numbers allotted him.

The Herbert score for this production is replete with melodies that everybody knows. The title song and "Land of My Own Romance" must have been sung literally thousands of times on the air, but the list of them retains a welcome freshness.

Easily Recognizable Tunes.

Not quite as familiar but easily recognizable are "Every Lover Must Meet His Fate" and "I Might Be Your Once-In-a-While."

Edwin McArthur gets a colorful and rousing rendition of the music from the orchestra. There are moments, particularly in the wooden shoe number, when it might be advisable for more members of the ensemble on the stage to watch his baton for a more unanimous beat.

The New York Times

JANUARY 22, 1947

THE PLAY

By BROOKS ATKINSON

Chief among Victor Herbert's "Sweethearts," put on at the Shubert last evening, is Bobby Clark, who has been a sweetheart for quite a long time. Since Herbert's sweethearts are pretty languid for a cold night in 1947, it is a fortunate thing that Mr. Clark, the illustrious clown, has decided to pay as little attention as possible to the music, the plot and the scenery. Everything in it goes to him by default, including the audience, which was more exhausted than he appeared to be at the final curtain.

Early in the first act he bounces on, wearing again that old covert cloth coat and flat hat, brandishing the walking stick and playing

slight-of-hand with a live cigar. To all honest Americans that has long since become the prologue to an exuberant evening of abdominal laughter.

There is no use in trying to describe it here. It conveys nothing to report that he wears about ten changes of costume, including the gingham wrapper of a lyrical laundry woman and the dusty campaign uniform of a prehistorical hussar. Shut your eyes for a moment, and Bobby pops out in something fresh and outlandish, looking like teacher's pet—smug and simpering.

But Bobby's genius is his fantastic vitality. There's hardly a moment in his performance when he has not thought of some gag to start the guffawing. He dances happily around the ironing board like an inspired imp. After wringing out a union suit, which is always a burlesque prop on the stage, he flings it accurately over his head across a wash-line twenty-five feet away. During one of Herbert's pastrty melodies, he trundles a cart on the stage and inquires across the footlights: "Say, did a

horse just run down the aisle?"

He keeps up a running conversation of jokes and puns that fortunately have nothing to do with the play—ogling and leering with boyish mischief. Give him a song to sing, and he throws himself into it with hilarious earnestness and sings it like the prize pupil of some very elegant teacher. "Pilgrims of Love" is his current masterpiece. With five other actors, he sings it in the costume of a monk. He is by turns grave, startled, coy, bravura and condescending; and as far as the audience is concerned, he might go on singing it until two tomorrow morning.

If any of the other actors is ambitious it may be a little trying to be romantic or serious when Oom Bobby is anywhere within twenty blocks. But his style is so happy that they probably can bear it; and they can console themselves with the thought that without Bobby there would be no work for anyone else.

"Sweethearts" is up to the armpits in dress uniforms, romantic suitors, bridling girls, princes and

moth-eaten nonsense. It takes place in Zilania, which seems to be somewhere in the Balkans, with a few square miles of the Netherlands thrown in. The score is sweet and vacuous, or at any rate seems so to a generation that never before heard a triangle struck in the orchestra pit.

Doing as well by Herbert as possible, the management has hired Gloria Story and June Knight to sing and look beautiful and Mark Dawson to sing and look handsome. Marjorie Gateson plunges vigorously and humorously into the business of being chateleine to a group of nubile young ladies. Janice Cloffi introduces the second act with a skilful ballet number. Any number of willing men and women go through the familiar motions of old-fashioned operetta as though they believed in what they were doing.

But "Sweethearts" is Bobby's personal antic. To steal a word from "Finian's Rainbow," he is sort of grandiah. With the skill of a clown and the heart of a knock-about comedian, he is the funniest man in America.



JANUARY 23, 1947

Kronenberger

Mr. Clark Almost Pulls A Chestnut From the Fire

PM Reviews

As every one has been saying for years, Bobby Clark is a very funny fellow; and at the Shubert Tuesday night he was almost funny enough to save a very feeble show. He loped and he leered, he harrumphed and puffed his cigar, he laundered underwear and heaved it onto far-distant clothes lines, he got rigged up as everything but Millard Fillmore and Whistler's Mother, he languidly dangled a lace handkerchief and lustily trod a measure, he sang right notes and wrong ones,

he spat on the plot, he fell against the performers, he crept into the fireplace and slid off a sofa. He displayed energy, ingenuity, and versatility. He once more proved himself a notable comic. But to overcome all he was up against, he would have had to be a magician as well.

"Sweethearts" is a dull and dated operetta; it already seemed dull and dated when I saw a road-company revival of it in Cincinnati 25 years ago. Act I—Village Square in Zilania. Act II—The Palace. There

you have all you need to know about the vintage, and virtually all you need to know about the plot. Its complications are eminently Ruritanian, centering in a village maid who wins the heart of a prince and herself turns out to be a princess. However, it's not just wrinkles themselves that prove so bothersome; it's also the oafish and opiate pleasantries of the book, which John Cecil Holm has revamped without revitalizing; and the fairly lumpy nature of the production. A sustained period style might have been fun, but the style here is much more that of a well-drilled stock company. And the Victor Herbert score, which might have been a life-saver, isn't. There are two nice famous tunes—"Sweethearts" and "I Might Be Your Once in a While"—and one or two nice forgotten ones. But the only song that becomes a big stage-number is the sextet, "Pilgrims of Love," which, thanks largely to Bobby's clowning and croaking, has the kind of real daffiness that makes for real merriment.

As for Bobby himself, great as

his contribution is, it isn't—it could not be—all of a piece. The zany, untrammelled and triumphant, is wonderful. Almost as good is the Clark who from time to time detaches himself from the show to make faces at it. But fairly often it has him trapped; there are lines that nobody can make funny, and quite a number of them fall to Bobby's lot. Perhaps, too, we would get more from him if we got less of him. Here he has to fill a large vacuum where he ought only to be filling a part. It's not his fault, but it tells a little. That the show would go completely to pot if he weren't doing all he does is not the point. The point is the not uncommon Broadway one of weakening something strong to strengthen something weak. People so first-rate as Mr. Clark should be carefully unveiled in the choicest surroundings.

There are agreeable performances by Marjorie Gateson, Gloria Story, June Knight, Paul Best and others; but I am afraid that so far as "Sweethearts" is anything at all, it is a one-man show.

—LOUIS KRONENBERGER

"Sweethearts"—continued

NEW YORK
Herald Tribune
JANUARY 22, 1947

— By HOWARD BARNES —

Clark's a Sweetheart!

THE redoubtable Bobby Clark prances through "Sweethearts," at the Shubert, making a thin and frayed operetta something of a carnival. Without his irrepressible presence there would be scant excuse for this revival of a minor Victor Herbert work. Since he is on stage almost constantly, juggling his familiar cigar, champing at an imaginary stallion's bit, singing, dancing and kidding the daylight out of the show itself, there is more than a little merri-

ment in the Paula Stone-Michael Sloane production. John Cecil Holm has streamlined the original libretto to aid the brilliant clowning of the star. There are several nimble dance numbers and a bit of good singing. But for the current "Sweethearts," take Bobby Clark, or forget the whole matter.

In the nonsensically free adaptation of Moliere's "The Would-Be Gentleman" the actor demonstrated triumphantly that he could burlesque a classic with burlesque routines. He does it again in the new Herbert revival. Done up in an extraordinary wardrobe of baggy pants, frock coats and fright wigs, he romps through a tale of romance and royal succession in Zilanis with a grateful lack of reverence for his material. At one time he is asking the audience's

pardon for speaking to himself, explaining that it is an old operatic custom; at another he is singing the "Pilgrims of Love" song from the second act in a manner which would have startled the composer. Never is he at a loss to conjure up amusement in a rather tiresome entertainment.

The producers have wisely arranged for a conventional operetta presentation to back up his antics. Mark Dawson and Gloria Story sing and act in a properly regal fashion as the hero and heroine of what passes for a plot. The former is gifted with quite a voice as well as an engaging personality. Marjorie Gatenon, as the laundress whose adopted daughter turns out to be a princess, is a good-humored foil for the star and June Knight sings and dances proficiently, particularly in the celebrated number

"I Might Be Your Once-in-a-While," in which Jimmie Russell, Bruce Cartwright and Peter Holmes twirl her through some effective choreography.

Clark is not the fellow to relegate the operetta embellishments to his assistants. He has a rare time with "Pretty As a Picture" and raises his voice with somewhat dubious melodic felicity in "Jeanette and Her Little Wooden Shoes." Russell Bennett's musical arrangements are nicely adapted to the combination of operetta and travesty and John Kennedy's staging gets through the passages when the star is changing costumes with proper dispatch. "Sweethearts" is not much of a show for 1947 except for the fact that one of the most resourceful clowns of our stage makes it his particular field day.

Journal  American

JANUARY 22, 1947

'Sweethearts' Bows At Shubert Theatre

By ROBERT GARLAND

Last night, in 44th st., Bobby Clark clowning off with everything. Except, perhaps, the Shubert Theatre. From first to last, it was Bobby's evening. He made the most of it. With stick in hand, with glasses painted on, he had himself a clambake.

The occasion was the Paula Stone-Michael Sloane revival of Victor Herbert's "Sweethearts." Bobby Clark treated the ancient and dishonorable libretto the only way it could possibly be treated. He tossed it right out into the Messrs. Shuberts' Alley.

The doing-over is all the better for it. Tuneful as last night's resuscitation may be, the story on which the tunes are strung is one of the most preposterous with which Victor Herbert ever had to deal. John Cecil Holm's "revisions" are no noticeable improvement.

So Bobby Clark, as Dame Lucy's lunatic husband, kicks

the plot aside and, over its dead body, goes riotously on his rough and ready way. He kids the cast, the chorus, the corny character he himself is playing. He even kids the pay-as-they-enter customers.

Talking to himself, he explains that it's an old operetta habit. Kicking the remnants of the yarn around, he remarks that a thick story has seldom been so thin. Making love to Dame Lucy, he apologizes because his high intentions are so very low.

I'm glad John Kennedy let Bobby Clark take "Sweethearts" over at the Shubert. It's both good sense and direction.

Baltimore Premiere

Thirty-four years ago come Easter, this Victor Herbert musical play had its premiere in the Baltimore Academy of Music. The following September it bowed in here at the New Amsterdam. Then,

Tom McNaughton had the Bobby Clark assignment. Christie MacDonald was heroine.

When I telephoned Miss MacDonald to invite her to last night's opening, she was on her way to Hollywood to visit Mary Mannering. I was sorry! It would have been interesting to watch the former star's reactions to "Sweethearts" in 1947.

No matter what her reactions might have been, she would have admitted—as she has admitted many times before—that the story Victor Herbert's librettists tell is even sillier than the story of a musical play has any right to be.

There's a kingdom called Zilanis. There's a missing Princess called Sylvia. There's a wandering Prince called Franz. There's a plotting politician called Michel. And, to make things hard to follow, there's a Princess—who-is-no-Princess known as Liane.

To these, add a lovely laundress, six desirable daughters, an Englishman known as Butterfield Slingsby, a Dutchman known as the Petrus von Tromp, a couple of pleasant peasants, a couple of funny footmen and six plotters in monks' clothing, and you've got—

Well, you've got "Sweethearts" as far as the Smith-de Gressac-Holm libretto is concerned.

Gives It the Works

Not only have you got "Sweethearts" as far as the libretto is concerned, you're stuck with its

trite and tiresome story until—early in the opening stanzas—Bobby Clark comes on to take the entertainment over. Then, the piece gets good and going.

Bobby gives it the works. He talks, sings, dances. He howls, roars and glowers. He's a soldier, a civilian and a washerwoman. But he's Bobby Clark in finest fettle, always. Low, broad and hardworking, he, a character in search of material.

Gloria Story and June Knight come to his assistance. Miss Story does well with the title song and Miss Knight wins encores with "I Might Be Your Once-in-a-While," especially when she dances with Jimmie Russell, Bruce Cartwright and Peter Holmes.

Mark Dawson, as the wandering Prince, is a comparative newcomer with ability, style and an excellent singing voice. Broadway has seen him in "By Jupiter," the provinces in "Dancing in the Streets." And it is a pleasure to have Marjorie Gatenon once more on view.

Now, in its Bobby Clark version, "Sweethearts" has ensembles by Catherine Littlefield, scenery by Peter Wolf, costumes by Michael Luck, orchestral arrangements by Russell Bennett and some curious choreography attributed to Theodore Adolphus. And Victor Herbert's music...

Somewhere, somehow, Victor Herbert should thank Bobby Clark for living. It's their combined good show that's at the Shubert.

"Little A"

NEW YORK
Herald Tribune

JANUARY 16, 1947

By HOWARD BARNES

A Big A for Kruger

A NEW playwright has had vast assistance from a veteran actor in "Little A." Otto Kruger gives an arresting performance throughout the vagaries of the horror show at Henry Miller's Theater. What little quality there is in this Hugh White drama is doubly underlined by the playing. So much of the piece is sheer tripe that the efforts of Kruger and his associates belong under the heading of waste motion. The author has a certain sense of the theatrical, introducing his characters

with dispatch and arranging a somewhat striking second act climax, but he is generally concerned with trite lines and a dither of psychological and physical mumbo-jumbo.

It is not surprising that the cast is sometimes completely baffled by the proceedings. They are not too awful, except for the dialogue, when a timid soul in a small California town is being set upon by a faithless wife and a bastard son. "Little A" has a vague promise at the outset of becoming a rather novel twist on the theme of the turning worm. After poison potions, a slugging or two and a revolver shot the piece emerges as both ridiculous and trying. White should have fled this dramatic essay in the bottom drawer.

The pity is that Kruger has

tried to create sense and emotional excitement in the production. His portrayal is virtually flawless, as he finds out that his wife has been the mistress of his father and is trying to drive him insane, but the material leaves him merely gesticulating when he should have been flooding the stage with authority. Jessie Royce Landis has worse going with the part of the ruthless wife. Most of the time she merely succeeds in accentuating the more wretched aspects of a bad first try.

The others suffer in varying degree as "Little A" gradually degenerates. Robert Wiley as a founders. Robert Wiley as a moment or two as the impudent son, who confronts his technical father with his illegitimacy, but his final cry of "Oh, mummie!" as he gets winged by mistake in a bit of pistol play is a fragment

"LITTLE A"

Play by Hugh White. Staged by Melville Burke. Setting by Watson Barratt. Production Lights by Lee Kern. Associate producer, Harry Lambert. Presented by Sam Kassar at the Henry Miller's Theater, Wednesday evening, January 15, 1947. The cast: Aaron Strom, Jessie Royce Landis, Mary Howard, Ottilie Kruger, Phoebe Painter, Frances Bayer, Clyde Painter, Harry Metcalfe, Dr. Duncan Brown, Wallis Clark, Donald Storm, Robert Wiley.

SYNOPSIS: The living room of the Storm home in Rockbridge, a small town in northern California. Act I—Time: The present, about 10 p. m. Act II—Seven p. m. the following evening. Act III—About half an hour later.

of his career which is likely to haunt him. Wallis Clark, as a family doctor, remains remarkably unfrustrated in the midst of adultery, incest, attempted rape and assorted mayhem. Probably that was the best way to handle "Little A." It represents the theater at its least aromatic low tide.

The New York Times

JANUARY 16, 1947

THE PLAY

By BROOKS ATKINSON

Spring is closer than you think. The first green shoot is "Little A," which was put on at Henry Miller's last evening. For Hugh White's portentous drama of domestic hatred in the big gray house on the hill looks suspiciously like the sort of thing that goes on in the theatre at the tag-end of winter when everyone starts losing his mind.

"Little A" is a first play by a former teacher who served overseas in the Marines and now wants to forget. With one grandiloquent gesture he has wiped out everything the drama has accomplished since Piner. This is the story of an evil woman who has founded her life on a lie, but—by gad, sir—she pays for it at the final curtain.

With Jessie Royce Landis in the part, it is difficult to realize how monstrous this woman is. For Miss Landis is an attractive and sparkling woman who is also a good actress. Things are so solemn in the early scenes of "Little A" that you can hardly believe she is evil incarnate—ruling the city of Rockbridge tyrannically, bullying the kitchen help, tormenting her husband and treacherously concealing

the parentage of her son. By the third act the audience hisses her when she regally descends the stairs in a black gown, the color of evil. For it takes that long to realize that behind Miss Landis' brightness and good manners lies the implacable wickedness of a serpent.

The whole play has the air of high dramatic art. Mr. White begins his play with exalted church music, which promises something as symbolic as O'Neill. Watson Barratt has provided a fine drawing-room that would do credit to Ibsen. And among the actors is Otto Kruger as the unfortunate husband who has taken nineteen years of this ordeal without saying "boo." Mr. Kruger is also an excellent actor with a neat style.

spontaneity of manner and an intelligent knowledge of character design. His daughter, Ottilie Kruger, acts the part of a shy but talented servant, also with charm and intelligence. In their scenes together Mr. and Miss Kruger give "Little A" its few moments of genuine emotion.

But Mr. White's nickelodeon ideas of dramatic writing make "Little A" progressively unbearable. And the performance as a whole is equally old-fashioned, giving the impression of being acted by players who had never seen each other before but knew how to be polite to strangers. Wallis Clark's hearty informality as the good Dr. Brown comes straight out of "Little Women."

New York World-Telegram

JANUARY 16, 1947

'Little A' Starts Out Well, Then Blows Up

By WILLIAM HAWKINS.

"Little A" is a direct descendant of the 20-minute melodramas the stars used to use when they needed to pad their bankrolls in vaudeville.

It broods about some dire behaviour 19 years ago, and never makes it clear why it is coming to a head now.

The first act offers a promising situation and compelling characters. The second strains for action with cloudy motives. The

third throws caution to the winds in 10-20-30 sensationalism.

Starts Promisingly.

The promise of the play's start makes it impossible to relax and enjoy the shameless finale. "Little A" is the meek leading citizen of a small town. Brought up in the shadow of his father, Big A, he is now dominated by his wife, a cold witch if there ever was one. "Little A" likes finer things than the town and its people offer, but

if he mentions them his friends are inclined to remember that his mother lost her mind. He distrusts the affection between his wife and the son whom he suspects is not his.

One consolation is the orphan girl, a semi-servant in the house, who has promise as a composer.

Fights with Father.

When the son makes passes at the girl, he comes to blows with his father whom he taunts with his own illegitimacy.

From there out, "Little A's" hatred of his wife crystallizes into attempts to summon the courage to kill her, while she tries to establish his insanity.

It ends up with retribution, when the wife shoots at "Little A" and kills her adored son, who is actually "Little A's" half brother. This is less confusing but more unreal than it sounds.

Characters Inconsistent.

The inconsistency of the main characters passes all understanding. The cast presents reasonably designed and effectively projected people, but none of their can

overcome the downhill slide into gratuitous violence.

Otto Kruger is both moving and convincing as the harassed "Little A," and makes a joyous conversation when he sees hope of freedom. He is as dignified as possible when dealing with poison and guns.

Jessie Royce Landis similarly gets off to a good start with a cool, lightly played picture of a ruthless woman. By the middle of the second act she is forced into an eye rolling, tummy clucking cloy. After her black garbed entrance in the third act is hissed, she gives it the Tosca treatment.

Plays with Simplicity.

Ottilie Kruger plays with simplicity and effect as the orphan, and Wallis Clark is mellow as an illogical doctor. Frances Bayer is a delight as a tissue paper brained acquaintance, and Robert Wiley makes the son appreciably offensive.

The set is appropriate, the staging makes sense when it can, and the lighting produces excellent effects. What "Little A" needs is two new acts in the vein of its first one.

"Little A"—continued

The Sun

JANUARY 16, 1947

'Little A' Has Tension and Suspense, but Gets Out of Control in Final Act.

By WARD MOREHOUSE.

"Little A," a play of frustration, bitterness and long-sustained hatreds, brings considerable tension and suspense into Henry Miller's Theater and for two leisurely acts it is steadily interesting and frequently exciting, but in the final act Hugh White's drama falls apart. The first performance was given last night under the auspices of a new producer, Sam Nasser.

Hugh White is an author new to Broadway. He reveals a feeling for character and a certain skill in his story-telling. Some of his scenes are badly overwritten, but the play actually holds you until the last scenes, and then matters become quite too lurid for any plausibility. Too bad. For two-thirds of the way the weird goings-on in the big gray house on the hill, town of

Rockbridge, northern California, provided some strong theater.

Little A of the Henry Miller's new drama is the son and heir of the owner of the town and he has been plagued and humiliated all his life by the legend of the greatness of his father, who was known as Big A. For nineteen years Little A, married to the dead man's former housekeeper, has lived submissively

with a dominating woman he despises. He has long suspected that her coddled and loathsome son, now in college, is not his.

Finally, he discovers the revolting truth. He is thus given a surge of courage and announces that he is walking out on wife, home and the town. But the relentless and cunning Lucinda Storm will accept no such defeat. She threatens to have him returned on grounds of insanity. Here is a situation that brings on violence—and that ends in sudden and ironic tragedy.

The play's most glaring weakness, I suspect, is the unexpected twist that comes as a climax to the wild doings, and as rather complete evidence that Playwright White couldn't find his way skillfully out of a situation that two acts of his drama had brought about. "Little A," in fact, began getting out of control with its second-act curtain and the play's jolting finish is not an easy one to accept.

There is some excellent acting upon the stage of Henry Miller's. Otto Kruger, playing a baffled and beaten man who finds sudden strength in truth,

gives a performance that reminds us of how compelling an actor he really is, a performance that is undoubtedly his best hereabouts since he was in Eugene O'Neill's long-neglected play, "The Straw."

Jessie Royce Landis is extraordinarily effective as the cold, vicious and cunning Lucinda Storm, who rules her household demoniacally. Robert Willey is very good indeed as the shallow and insolent son. There are nice performances from Frances Bavier and Harry Mehauffey as folksy townspeople, from Wallis Clark as a puttering country doctor, and from young Ottilie Kruger as an orphan seeking a musical career, and who has the talent to justify it.

"Little A" exhibits Hellman-esque fury here and there; it is a melodrama not to be abruptly dismissed. It has been well directed by the stage-wise and competent Melville Burke. Hugh White shows playwrighting promise, but he needs a third act to go along with his other two. "Little A," therefore, is by no means all it should be.

DAILY NEWS

JANUARY 16, 1947

'Little A' Is a Malevolent Chiller Well Acted by Landis and Kruger

By JOHN CHAPMAN

The title, "Little A," has a lower-case connotation; but as a play and in the manner in which it was performed at Henry Miller's Theatre last evening, "Little A" is decidedly

Upper Case. It is a drama of tingling malevolence—not big, not showy, but possessed of considerable inner excitement—and a small company headed by Jessie Royce Landis and Otto Kruger plays it flawlessly.

Hugh White, the author, has done nothing more revolutionary than to write three acts. One has met his people before in other dramas and in movies. I had for instance, encountered Miss Landis a couple of times previously—as Judith Anderson, perhaps, in "Rebecca" and quite certainly as Tallulah Bankhead in "The Little Foxes." Mr. Kruger, who plays the Little A of the title, is a not un-

familiar figure as a sensitive dreamer beaten down by the stupidities of realists.

Mr. White's achievement is modest enough in purpose and most effective in result. He has written smoothly and surely; his characters have three dimensions because he has found a way to get inside them, and his story, kept within a small compass though it is, is a compelling one. There are two very nice people in "Little A," one very understanding person, two normally dumb ones and two who are quite fascinatingly evil.

Unlike His Father.

The man of the title role is the

heir of a northern California pioneer tycoon—the founder of a tight little cannery empire who was known as Big A. Big A's portrait dominates the living room of the big house on the hill, and his ghost dominates the lives of those who have inherited his empire.

Little A is no Big A; he isn't forceful, he isn't loud, he doesn't laugh as his father did. The boss of the empire is his wife—a hard-minded woman who, when she was a girl from the wrong side of town, promised herself that some day she would live in the big house on the hill. In 19 years of married life she has crushed her husband—and it is on their 19th anniversary that we meet the couple at Henry Miller's Theatre.

The drama is the story of the turning worm—a device often used

for comedy, as in the case of Frank Craven's "The First Year," and now put to the uses of chill melodrama. The ending is a quick one, tricky enough, and satisfying; for at last Miss Landis gets what is coming to her.

Well Directed by Burke.

She's a terrible woman, Miss Landis—handsome, cold and cunning; a thoroughly satisfying bee eye double itch. It's a grand performance, and it has been a long time since I have so much enjoyed hating anybody.

On the other hand, Mr. Kruger is a very nice guy—a pipe-smoker, a dreamer, a chess-player, a lover of music; a gent who, indeed, may be insane. It is a good thing to have Mr. Kruger back on the stage, for he has authority.

The other players of "Little A" are capital—Wallis Clark as a hard-headed doctor, Robert Willey as a fabulously offensive college sophomore (Miss Landis' son), Mr. Kruger's daughter Ottilie as a music-hungry orphan and Harry Mehauffey and Frances Bavier as a delightful pair of small-town clucks.

They have all been directed in fine style by Melville Burke right down to the last-minute murder, and Watson Barratt's setting is okay.

New York Post

JANUARY 16, 1947

Suspense But No Conviction In Melodramatic 'Little A'

By Richard Watts Jr.

The theatre's most sympathetic theme, the one about the turning worm, is crossed with a psychological horror tale in Hugh White's "Little A" to make a melodrama that has lots of suspense and too little conviction. If it had been written with more skill and persuasion, and a third-act pistol hadn't been passed about like a basketball, the new play might have been another "Kind Lady," which means it would have been near the head of its class. As it is, the result is pretty good fun and pretty bad drama.

It is rather a shame, since "Little A," which now seems a trifle silly, has good material in it. Its characters, its setting and its central dramatic situation are interesting and potentially impressive. It has, too, a shrewd and exceptionally ingratiating performance in the title role by Otto Kruger and a properly chilling one by Jessie Royce Landis,

as the menace. More should have come from it, which at times last night appeared likely.

With pleasant deceptiveness, Mr. White's play starts off as a homespun comedy about a meek business man and his dominating wife. Then, just as you are about to accept its leisurely-paced story of domestic tyranny, the so-called psychological melodrama rears its interesting head, and it all looks promising.

Aaron Storm

It appears that one Aaron Storm is called "Little A" by

everybody in Rockbridge, California, because he is such a meek and humble scion of the elder Aaron Storm, who had dominated the town and was known respectfully as "Big A." Little A was treated with casual contempt by his wife, the neighbors and the boy supposed to be his son and was appreciated only by his old classmate, Dr. Brown, and the appealing orphan girl with the talent for composing music, who worked around the house and was bullied by the nasty wife.

What with one thing and another, you will be less surprised than the doctor to find, somewhere in the first act, that Little A has come to suspect that his wife had been his father's mistress, the son was not his and that he would enjoy the thrill of poisoning the woman he loathed. From then on the melodrama takes over from the domestic picture.

As I have said, there are good things in the play. The characters are believable in outline, the brief portrayal of the town's dull social life is convincing, and the sense of a guileless man, hopelessly trapped in his own household and desperately attempting to escape, is hauntingly captured. In addition, there is an ingenious-

ly conceived scene wherein the neighbors try to inveigle Little A into appearing in some fatuous amateur theatricals while his wife's plot against him is reaching its climax.

Poetic Justice

Nevertheless, the drama is essentially unpersuasive. The writing lacks straightforward dramatic credibility and has a way of indulging in unfortunately elaborate passages. In addition, the last act, while it certainly has its proper share of excitement and poetic justice, runs too wild in its melodramatic forays.

Mr. Kruger's performance is one of the best things I have ever seen him do in the theatre. It is a particularly sympathetic role and he plays it with remarkable genuineness, taste and humor. Miss Landis, an excellent actress who is usually the most sympathetic character in any play, shifts skillfully to villainy and is easily the wickedest woman of the theatrical season. Ottile Kruger plays the downtrodden orphan with quiet honesty.

"Little A" is assuredly not a bore, but it fails to keep in mind that the best melodrama is the most credible. I could believe in the story but not in the manner of telling it.

Journal American

JANUARY 16, 1947

'Little A' in Debut At Henry Miller's

By ROBERT GARLAND

There're one or two—maybe all of three—promising new names on the programs at Henry Miller's Theatre.

There's the name of Hugh White. Mr. White wrote the play which had its first metropolitan showing last night on 43rd st. There's the name of Sam Nasser. Mr. Nasser produced the play which arrived in town with pre-Broadway blessings from my critical colleagues in my native Baltimore. There's the name of Harry Lambert. Mr. Lambert is associated with Mr. Nasser.

Each, in the order mentioned, has something good to give to the "Little A" about which I'm writing.

In the role of dramatist, Mr. White provides an inclusive and surprisingly expert small-town tragedy. In the role of pre-

suer, Mr. Nasser provides an impressive and consistently big-time production. In the role of his associate, Mr. Lambert may well have provided the good direction by Melville Burke, the better lighting by Leo Kern and the best background by Watson Barrack.

These and a cast headed by Jessie Royce Landis, Otto Kruger and Wallis Clark work wholeheartedly together. Seldom have you seen such close cooperation.

Not Convincing

It's a wonder the result isn't more convincing than it is in "Little A" at Henry Miller's Theatre. It ought to be.

But it isn't. You—I do, at any rate—want tremendously to take stock in the Storm Family of the

Never-Never Land where West Coasters know what they want without knowing exactly how to get it lawfully. Or decently. In the canning community of Rockbridge pictured by Hugh White, Aaron and Lucinda, with their dubious offspring Donald, are incredibly bewitched, bothered and bewildered.

Mr. White's is a fine, fresh flair for dialogue, but his story-telling too often lets his people down.

Especially his Lucinda Storm who, with a pistol borrowed from Hedda Gabler, a malevolence borrowed from Regina Hubbard and a marksmanship of which Annie Oakley would be ashamed, dominates the play. A sort of Lady Macbeth of Northern California, her final comeuppance stems from a sheer coincidence rather than from the stark inevitability of a truly tragic play. Only fast can fictionize that way.

If Hugh White's first drama were the equal of his first dialogue, there'd be headlines shouting "Fine New Dramatist Arrives!"

Big A's Ghost

But Hugh White's drama isn't the equal of his dialogue, and headlines merely state that "Little A is Promising."

So there's small need to go into the incestuous details of how Big A, first of the Aaron Storms, dominates Little A, last of the Aaron Storms, even though Big A is dead and buried before the play begins. Or how Little A marries Lucinda from the wrong side of the tracks. Or how Big A is actually the father of Little A's so-called son. Or how that boy Donald is one of the most despicable dastards now on a public platform.

As Donald, the dastardly, Robert Willey is repulsive as required, affecting a speaking voice queerly unrelated to his wolf-like goings-on.

Frances Xavier and Harry McHaffey are happily human as Phoebe and Clyde Painter, bridge-minded neighbors. Wallis Clark is a dithering doctor. Ottile Kruger is a maidenly musician. But, as Aaron Storm and his Storm-tossed Lucinda, Otto Kruger and Jessie Royce Landis are super-excellent. Lillian Hellman should be inspired to write another play around Miss Landis. Or Hugh White, who, if he does so, will win his award next time...

If I'm mistaken and "Little A" has a profitable Broadway career, I'll be as happy as playwright, producers and players put together. They're that prime and promising, really.

"Little A"—continued



JANUARY 17, 1947

Kronenberger

While the Worm Turns The Play Goes Sky-High

PM Reviews

Little A is not the first play to suffer badly from not knowing what it wants to be. Nor is it the last play whose writing would keep it, whatever its aims, from ever being very much. Mr. White has wavered in his affections between drama and melodrama, between something life-sized and harsh and something blown-up and hollow.

In neither mood, moreover, is he more than sporadically effective. His low notes tend to go flat and his high ones are sheer screeching. Nor are matters much improved by Mr. Burke's *maestoso* direction, which often shows things up as pitilessly as a slow-motion camera. Little A, as middle-aged Aaron Storm is called, is a kindly man who has been turned into a worm

by his family. Big A, his dead father, had been a jovially domineering big shot who made his son seem like a colorless cipher; Lucinda, Little A's wife, is a malevolently ambitious woman who married for position, bore Little A his father's child, and contemptuously keeps her husband in virtual chains. But these people have only scotched the worm, not killed it. Aaron Storm is still capable of defiance. The wife he defies, however, is in the best tradition of stage villainesses, a real third-act tiger; and it requires the best brand of ten-twenty-third justice to finish her off.

Once the poisons and pistols arrive on the scene, Little A goes sky-high incredible, with only some moments of hammy excitement to show for it. But the truth is that the play is in danger of expiring long before it explodes. Even where its contretemps are less drastic and more domesticated, the writing and construction are pain-

fully uneven. (Little A's scenes with the doctor and the servant girl who appreciate him not only show things down but are dull in themselves.) Certainly the play has possibilities, and now and then Mr. White manages an interesting scene or a moment of sharp feeling; but even more costly than the unsureness of his writing is the faultiness, the downright falsity, of his characterizations. He uses any means to make the chief roles "effective," and they do not hold together. The whole play, in fact, hasn't the faintest notion of how to maintain a level; and at every level something miscarries.

The happiest feature of the evening is Otto Kruger's extremely skillful performance as Little A; it deserves a much better context. As the wife, Jessie Royce Landis has to hit pretty high to keep on visiting terms with the script, but she at least brings force to a role that defies reality.

—LOUIS KRONENBERGER

"Finian's Rainbow"

The New York Times

JANUARY 11, 1947

THE PLAY

By BROOKS ATKINSON

Jettisoning most of the buncombe of the traditional musical show, E. Y. Harburg and Fred Saisy have written an original and humorous fantasy, "Finian's Rainbow," which was put on at the Forty-sixth Street last evening. Do not be terrified by the news that it whirled around a leprechaun and a magic pot of gold. For Mr. Harburg and Mr. Saisy wrote "Bloomer Girl" two seasons ago, and that was no stinky show.

With some clarion music by Burton Lane and some joyous dancing by a company of inspired sprites, the authors have conjured up a rare-show of enchantment, humor and beauty, to say nothing of enough social significance to hold the franchise. It puts the American musical stage several steps forward for the imagination with which it is written and for the stunning virtuosity of the performance.

Elia Logan, with her pair of potent pipes, is bellying some rapturous Irish songs as the daughter of a crack-brained Irish spell-maker—"How Are Things in

Glocca Morra?" being her most beguiling number. As the central mischief-maker, the producers have had the good sense to import a rare Irish entertainer, Albert Sharpe. Mr. Sharpe is a high-stepping and sagacious comic who radiates merriment and who plunges into the "Finian's Rainbow" fable with the most infectious good humor.

Add to Miss Logan and Mr. Sharpe a leprechaun whose sense of humor does not destroy the purity of the fairy story, and you have an incomparable band of unbackneyed performers. The leprechaun is played by David Wayne, who has a grin just a trifle too worldly for complete innocence. His best song, sung once with Miss Logan, is entitled "Something Sort of Grandish." It and he should be inscribed in the Hall of Fame.

If the American musical stage continues to improve, it will no longer be necessary for anyone to speak dialogue on the stage. Everything essential can be said in song and dancing. Against a wide and rhapsodic setting by Jo Mielziner, the ballet dancers of "Finian's Rainbow" begin the evening with some lyrical springtime rites of real glory. If notes of music could leap across the stage, they would be no lighter or lovelier than this joyous ballet of a young and free people. Mr. Kidd has designed it with skill and enthusiasm. The leading dancer is Anita Alvarez, a performer in a style of dancing gossamer. Mr. Kidd and his band

of dancers have interpreted the theme of "Finian's Rainbow" like thoroughbreds and artists.

Not all of "Finian's Rainbow" is on the highest level. It concludes the first act with a conventional finale calculated to split your ear drums. In the second act it gives you an eye-ful of tawdry musical show enticements descended from Ziegfeld. And its stubborn shotgun marriage of fairy-story and social significance is not altogether happy. The capriciousness of the invention does not last throughout the evening.

But those are minor reservations to the enjoyment of a highly original evening in the theatre in the presence of a stageful of good companions. Although the production is large and varied, Bretaigne Windust has ably put it together and set it a happy pace. Thanks for a refreshing theatre party.

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December 31, 1947

"FINIAN'S RAINBOW"

Musical comedy, with book by E. Y. Harburg and Fred Saisy; lyrics by E. Y. Harburg; music by Burton Lane; directed by Bretaigne Windust; scenery and lighting by Jo Mielziner; choreography by Michael Kidd; costumes by Eleanor Goldsmith; orchestrations by Robert Russell Bennett and Don Walker; vocal arrangements by Len Murray; musical director, Milton Rosenstock; presented by Les Baskins and William K. Katsal, at the 46th Street Theatre, Friday evening, January 10, 1947. The cast:

Bunny (Harmonica Player).....Sunny Terry
Boss Collins.....Eddie Bruce
Sheriff.....Tom McKibben
1st Sharecropper.....Alan Gilbert
2nd Sharecropper.....Robert Eric Carlson
Susan Mahoney.....Anita Alvarez
Henry.....Angus Smith Jr.
Pauline McLernan.....Albert Sharpe
Sharon McLernan.....Elia Logan
Woody Mahoney.....Donald Richards
3rd Sharecropper.....Ralph Waldo Cummings
Og (A Leprechaun).....David Wayne
Howard.....William Gravies
Senator Billboard Hawkins.....Robert Plicks
1st Geologist.....Lucas Aro
2nd Geologist.....Nathaniel Dickerson
Diane.....Diana Woods
Jane.....Jane Earle
John (The Preacher).....Hiland Skinner
4th Sharecropper.....Maude Rimmey
Mr. Hobart.....Arthur Tall
Mr. Shears.....Royal Dado
1st Passion Pilgrim Gospelist.....Jerry Laws
2nd Passion Pilgrim Gospelist.....Lorraine Fuller
3rd Passion Pilgrim Gospelist.....Louis Sharp
1st Deputy.....Michael Ellis
2nd Deputy.....Robert Eric Carlson
3rd Deputy.....Harry
Other Children.....Norma Jane Marlowe,
Elaine Richards

SYNOPSIS: Act I—Scene 1: The Merin' Farm, Rainbow Valley, Kentucky. Scene 2: The Same that Night. Scene 3: The Colonial Estate of Senator Billboard Hawkins, the West. Scene 4: The Merin' Farm, following day. Scene 5: A Path in the Woods. Scene 6: The Merin' Farm, next morning. Act II—Scene 1: Rainbow Valley, a few years later. Scene 2: A Wooded Section of the Hill. Scene 3: The Merin' Farm. Scene 4: Just before dawn.

"Finian's Rainbow"—continued

The Sun

JANUARY 11, 1947

'Finian's Rainbow,' Colorful Musical Play, Jubilant Hit at 46th St. Theater.

By WARD MOREHOUSE.

There have been high tales from the road of the musical play called "Finian's Rainbow" and last night it came to town, bringing the first night horde swarming down upon the 46th St. Theater. Well, the news is this: The new show is a good one. It is fresh and jubilant and imaginative, and something not to miss.

"Finian's Rainbow" has color and life and movement. It offers some nice music, bright lyrics, exciting ensemble effects and fetching scenery and lighting from the inevitable and certainly indispensable Jo Mielzner.

There is an occasional book tediousness, with some humor that might well be discarded, and

there is frequently too much of the garrulous old Irishman who steals the crock of gold from the leprechauns, but these are minor complaints. The new show is, in all truth, quite the best musical piece that has turned up in New York this season. And Broadway

can use it.

"Finian's Rainbow" is crowded—occasionally too crowded—with realism and fantasy. It fairly bulges with story material, enough of it for three or four song and dance plays, as it relates the fantastic things that come about after old Finian McLonergan has brought his gold to America and into the mythical State of Missitucky, and with Og, the leprechaun, in pursuit.

When the book by E. Y. Harburg and Fred Saily begins to flounder, as it does now and then, the evening is helped along by the lyrics of Harburg, the music of Burton Lane, the choreography of Michael Kidd and the over-all staging of Bretteville Windust, borrowed from the dramatic stage. He has apparently had a holiday in putting the show together.

The veteran Irish character actor, Albert Sharpe, making his first appearance in this country, gives a good account of himself

as the roguish old Finian. Ella Logan has abundant bounce and exuberance as Finian's daughter, who gets involved in the strange goings-on in Rainbow Valley. David Wayne is impish and waggish and thoroughly engaging as the leprechaun, who takes a whirl at being a mortal, and Anita Alvarez is rather marvelous in her whirlwind dancing.

Robert G. Pitkin, who has been turning up in my notebook since

"The Paradise of Mahomet," gives his usual vigor to the role of the blustering Senator Billboard Rawkins who, upon the whim of the leprechaun, working his magic in Rainbow Valley, is turned from white to black.

"Finian's Rainbow," if not quite living up to the enormous advance buildup, is a bitlessome and beguiling show. And it's a hit, too. Lee Saberson and William R. Katzell, producers of the worthy but short-lived "Home of the Brave," probably have it coming to them.



JANUARY 13, 1947

Kronenberger

A Nice Musical Blend Of Fantasy and Satire

Finian's Rainbow is a nice show, a far better than average musical. Better yet, it isn't much like the average musical. But in the very act of welcoming it with becoming praise, I can't help thinking that under different circumstances my hat might have been in the air. With so much about it that lifts you up, the pity is there's a good deal also that pulls you down.

See-saw reviewing is never very satisfactory, so let's put the good things, as they deserve to be put, first. *Finian* has the kind of novelty and surface freshness that Broadway is always the better for. It combines fairly batty fantasy with fairly purposeful satire; it is, in fact, a musical with a social conscience, with message in its madness. Moreover, the people con-

cerned in turning it out have a good deal to offer. They know how to be gay; they know how to be funny; they know how to be tune-ful; they even know, here and there, how to be surprising. All this adds up to a lot; to, in fact, an unusual show which it is time to describe in more detail, though—considering the notable capriciousness and congestion of the plot—that isn't easy.

Briefly, *Finian* tells how an Irishman borrows a magic pot of gold from a leprechaun, brings it (and his daughter) to America, and buries it in sharecropper soil in a Southern state called Missitucky. The daughter, to get that obvious development out of the way, promptly falls in love with a willing native. The leprechaun soon enough turns up and eventually

turns human. Much of the yarn, however, has to do with the happy effects of the magical pot of gold on sharecroppers, Negroes, and bigoted, bullying Senator Billboard Rawkins who, by being turned into a Negro, learns to mend his ways.

Much of all this gets the right attention. When *Finian* lets go with its best brand of fun—as in *The Begot*, or as in a fantasy called *When the Idle Poor Become the Idle Rich*, where the sharecroppers strut in all the outlandish glory of mail-order fine feathers—things, couldn't be better. There are some pleasant romantic songs, too, like *How Are Things in Glocca Morra?* and *If This Isn't Love*. There is some bright dialogue, some pleasant humor, and now and then a brisk satiric swipe. There is life and gaiety in Michael Kidd's dances, though at moments they have a bit too much of an in-tune-with-the-universe air. Albert Sharpe makes a thoroughly jovial Irishman, and David Wayne a really delightful leprechaun. And the whole show has about it a sense of trying for something different and original.

It's just because this is so that there is disappointment in the midst of pleasure, and a frequent sudden sense that what had seemed to be rolling out of a horn of plenty is only tumbling out of the ragbag.

That *Finian* isn't really very imaginative, or musically very inspired, or satirically very trenchant, is rather to assess its talents than assail them; they are ample for the purpose. But *Finian* hasn't enough taste or sensibility or integrity; and at the level it professes to work on, these deficiencies stick out like sore thumbs. There is, for my money, a harrowing cuteness in some of the goings-on, and even the lyrics, of the show; and I'm afraid that Ella Logan, proficient as she is with a song, rather contributes to it. There is, again, a needlessly bad gag for every good one. (I've often wondered about clocking the laughs in a show: does the management regard as adequate that faint whinnying that seems to come from some bit of swamp toward the back of the house?) Worst of all, *Finian* descends at times to cheap and even outhouse humor. All this gives you a sense of people who are running away from the standard Broadway scene but continually sneaking back for another glimpse of it.

Finian has plenty of popular appeal, and what blemishes it has probably won't disturb the average play-goer the least bit. But what sets it a little apart has the kind of value that ought not and need not have been cheapened. One's protest is, in a way, a form of inverted praise.—LOUIS KRONENBERGER

"Finian's Rainbow"—continued

DAILY NEWS

JANUARY 11, 1947

'Finian's Rainbow' Shows Way to Treasure of Song and Nonsense

By JOHN CHAPMAN

At the end of "Finian's Rainbow" there is a pot of golden moments. This musical, which had its premiere last evening at the Forty-Sixth Street Theatre, has more charms

than a young girl's bracelet. It is the box of circus candy with the special prize inside—the Good Humor on the lucky stick. With "Beggar's Holiday" and "Street Scene," it completes a trio of outstanding productions which have come to Broadway within a fortnight's time.

"Finian's Rainbow" is a captivating whimsy about an Irishman and his daughter who have come from far-off Glocca Morra to Rainbow Valley, an idyllic spot in the very Southern state of Mississippi, whose blabbermouth Senator is one Billboard Rawkins.

With him the Irishman has brought a pot of gold—a very spe-

cial pot which the old fellow has borrowed from the leprechauns of his native isle. It is magic gold, worth more for what it can do than for what it can buy. Finian buries it in Rainbow Valley and it works many wonders, not the least of which is the conversion of the Senator to a liberal frame of mind (it turns him into a Negro for a while and shows him how it feels).

David Wayne a Treasure.

The Irishman is Albert Sharpe, an admirable, amiable comedian who is making his American debut. His daughter is Ella Logan, a Scottish lass who makes a fine colleen. Miss Logan has an utterly deligh-

ful way of singing a song, and she has many good ones to sing.

In pursuit of the stolen pot of gold comes a leprechaun, played by David Wayne, and never was a man-size sprite more spritely. Next to the atom bomb, whimsy is the most dangerous stuff to fool with. In the wrong hands it will blow up in one's face and make a mess of things—but Mr. Wayne's are the right hands. He can cast a spell, or sing a song like "Something Sort of Grandish," or entertain children with the endless gifts in a mail order catalogue, in a manner that is quite magical.

There are many more ingredients in this golden pot of "Finian's Rainbow"—the dancing of Anita Alvarez, the singing of Donald Richards, the Senator of Robert Pitkin, the harmonica playing of Sonny Terry. But ingredients can

go wrong unless somebody puts them together right.

Credit for the Makers.

The ones who have put them together are the authors, the scenic designer, the director, the costume designer, the dance director and the producers. E. Y. Harburg and Fred Saidu (who wrote the "Bloomer Girl" libretto), have written the book—a nice combination of nonsense and standard boy-girl romance which packs a good wallop at the Bilbos of the South.

Mr. Harburg has written the lyrics and they are top-grade—witty or pretty, funny or satirical as needs dictate. Burton Lane has set them to pleasant melodies. And, under the guidance of Michael Kidd, an inspired white and Negro chorus does some of the best dancing imaginable.

Jo Mielziner's setting is just the place for leprechauns and lovers, and Bretaigne Witvust, the director, has kept it alive with movement and color. You'll be hearing most of the songs on the air, if you have not already done so. But seeing is believing, especially when it comes to leprechauns or when it comes to a first-act finale like "Great Come-and-Get-It Day," in which everybody comes decked out in just what he wanted out of a mail order catalogue. Eleanor Goldsmith, the costume designer, rates a prize for this number alone.



New York World-Telegram

JANUARY 11, 1947

'Finian' Daft and Delightful Play Has Singable Songs and Dances with Bounce

By WILLIAM HAWKINS.

"Finian's Rainbow" is a daft tale wrapped up in eminently singable tunes and air-borne dances.

You have to throw imagination to the wind to ride along with the slightly insane story of how Irish leprechauns settle the race problem in the south of this country.

The first transitions from fantasy to brutal prejudice land with a thud. Once the idea is established and the magical influence takes control of proceedings, the show rolls along delightfully and nonsensically to a happy musical ending.

Bringing Leprechaun's Gold.

Finian brings his daughter to America because he knows it is a fertile land. Having heard of Port Knox, he has stolen a crock of the leprechaun's gold, which he wants to bury here to let it grow.

They buy land which some sharecroppers are about to lose to a conniving, prejudiced Senator

of Mississippi. In an argument with the Senator, the daughter, Sharon, turns him black by using one of the three wishes the crock makes possible.

The second wish is used up by Cg, a leprechaun, searching for the crock, who wants his mute love to speak. And the third saves Sharon from the wrath of the Senator's leeches.

Scenes Change Swiftly.

All this and more is set against a fertile valley, and changes scene swiftly behind a cross-crossing pair of forested curtains.

The music, already well broken in on the air, is the sort that will be heard frequently on all sides. The tunes are reminiscent, but pleasantly so because they remind you of favorites. Hearing them is like having a hat you are particularly fond of blocked or re-trimmed.

These songs get expert treatment by the principals, and an

added choral glory by the Lyn Murray Singers.

Dances of Flashing Energy.

The dances are of the kick up your heels, let your hair fly, and bounce off the floor, variety. They fill the stage with flashing energy then seem to blow away.

Ella Logan is the Sharon whose father, Finian, involves her in this shadow and substance. She is an engaging personality who knows her way around the stage, and she sings two thirds of the show's musical numbers.

After the reception of last night's audience she can relax and let her wistful catchy voice take care of the numbers. She needs no dependence on plugging vocal tricks that can make Al Jolson sound like a lieder singer.

Finian Slightly Zany.

Albert Sharpe, in an American debut as Finian, makes a warm, appealing and slightly zany ad-

venturer of the old fellow with a rainbow and an imagination. Donald Richards brings a lusty voice and pleasant cockiness to the cropper Sharon loves.

The leprechaun gets outstanding treatment at the hands of David Wayne. He plays with a flighty wistfulness that makes Og most endearing. More than that he brings distinct charm to some incredibly kittenish lyrics.

Anita Alvarez gives fire to the part of the mute who must express herself through dancing. One of the show's high points is the solo in which she discovers the crock. Moving swiftly about to the yearning music of a harmonica, she depicts most clearly the troubled desires of her frustration.

Pictorially Striking.

A striking pictorial moment is the wedding, with Miss Logan wearing a train that must have escaped from the Folies and is about a quarter of a mile long.

Of the score, the winner to date seems to be "Glocca Morra," which has already been recorded by every self-respecting singer in the business. "If This Isn't Love" and "Old Devil Moon" should give it a close race.

"Necessity" is a natural for parodies, and the rhythmic "Beggat" needs none.

The orchestrations make the most of the tunes, keeping melodies and rhythm predominant, with a strong beat from the percussion and guitar.

"Finian's Rainbow"—continued

New York Post

JANUARY 11, 1947

Mythical Visitor From Eire In Gay New Musical Show

By Richard Watts Jr.

"Finian's Rainbow," to waste no time about it, is the liveliest and most tuneful musical comedy of the season. In fact, it gave every evidence of being just the hit in the girl-and-music field that everybody has been waiting for. It is no doubt some kind of tribute to every one concerned that this is true despite the fact that the action takes place in a state called "Missitucky," a villainous character is named Senator Billboard Rawkins and a mail-order house is known as Shears and Robust.

Among other things, "Finian's Rainbow" is equipped with what may well be the most elaborate plot since "War and Peace." Taking in its stride handsomely diversified elements from pseudo-Irish mythology, complete with an oversized leprechaun and a mystic pot of gold, to left-wing social criticism, embracing sharecroppers, the poll tax, anti-Negro

senators, atomic energy, the gold at Fort Knox, the Tennessee Valley Authority and the economic future of mankind, the book mingles its authors' imagination with their politics amid much abandon.

Proper Springboard

I suspect that the narrative is neither as rich in its imaginative flights nor as biting in its editorial comment as E. Y. Harburg and Fred Saily, who wrote it, anticipated, but it is considerably above average and it provides the proper springboard for the excellent songs, dances and general gaiety that brighten the proceedings. It is the songs that are par-

ticularly helpful.

My impression, on first hearing, is that Burton Lane's music and Mr. Harburg's lyrics are neither brilliant nor startlingly original. Nevertheless, the songs are invariably agreeable to listen to, and certainly the score is gratifyingly filled with potential song hits. They range all the way from the proudly Irish sentiment of the charming "How Are Things in Glocca Morra?" to the Cole Porterish vein of "The Begat," and since Ella Logan is on hand to sing most of them delightfully, the effect is very pleasant, indeed.

The dancing, as staged by Michael Kidd, is especially gay and humorous, and there is always present the happy impression that the dancers are having just as good a time as is the audience. There is excellent humor, too, in the costumes that Eleanor Goldsmith has designed for a fine number in which leprechaun gold enables the sharecroppers to go on a buying orgy with their Shears and Robust catalogue.

While the plot isn't quite as good as the obvious effort expended upon it might have made one hope for, it contains several satisfactory comic inventions, some entertaining dialogue, and a general air of intelligence and high spirits. To repeat, "Finian's Rainbow" is an extremely good

show.

For that we should all be grateful, and I hope it does not seem too ungracious of me to add that it might have been not just a good show, but a brilliant one. What I found missing was a certain quality of taste and judgment. If some of the political comment were just a little less blatant, the plot just a bit more inventive in its manipulation and, above all, if the occasional propensity for bathroom humor—which certainly doesn't fit in with the quality of imagination the show frequently achieves—had been dropped altogether, the tale of the leprechaun's mission to America would have been even happier.

To get back to pleasant things, Ella Logan is delightful as the heroine, Albert Sharpe, an Irish actor I somehow never encountered before, makes an engaging enough character out of the old man who steals the pot of gold and brings it to America, and David Wayne makes the visiting leprechaun an engaging figure. Robert E. Pitkin is helpful as the bigoted senator turned black by Celtic magic, and there should be a special word of praise for Sonny Terry's wonderful harmonica playing. "Finian's Rainbow" is fun, in its merry pseudo-Irish fashion.

Journal American

JANUARY 11, 1947

'Finian's Rainbow' Opens at 46th St. Theatre

By ROBERT GARLAND

Excuse my rave review, but—Well, this is it. This most certainly is it, this "Finian's Rainbow" at the 46th Street Theatre. Presented last night by Lee Sab- inson and William Katzeil, the brand new musical has everything a grand new musical should have.

Not since the evening Annie got her gun and settled down at the Imperial have I felt so rave-review-ish about a song-and-dance show. But "Finian's Rainbow" is something about which to rave, an answer to a theatre-goer's prayers.

For when I repeat that this brand new musical has everything a grand new musical should have, I mean that "Finian's Rainbow" has the genius which, in or out of a song-and-dance show, is the result of the taking of infinite pains.

The story has fact and fancy. The lyrics are racy and romantic. The music is melodious and modern. And the production—direction, scenery, costumes, choreog-

raphy—is fresh and effective. Especially the choreography.

And the cast is perfect. Varied as it is vital, it is equally at ease with sharecroppers, colleens, senators, leprechauns, geologists, revivalists, organizers, visiting Irishmen and deaf-and-dumb daughters of Missitucky.

Seeks Lost Gold

You'll not believe the story of "Finian's Rainbow." Not even when I go on to tell you that, putting their imaginative heads together, E. Y. Harburg and Fred Saily bring Britain's Ireland to America's Missitucky to make their grand and brand new musical.

No sooner has the curtain gone up on the Meetin' Place in Rainbow Valley than Sharon McLonergan, right out of Glocca Morra, appears. With her is Finian, her father, and Og, a leprechaun who has lost his pot of gold and wants it back again.

Incredible complications ensue. Incredible when I relate them here, but credible and altogether charming when acted out with gestures, songs and dances up on the 46th Street stage. A song-and-dance show is better for a leprechaun.

"Finian's Rainbow" is, at any rate. And when Boy Woody meets Girl Sharon, what could be more natural than for Leprechaun Og to meet Deaf-and-Dumb Susan and fall in love with her? Or for a White Senator Billboard to turn into a Black Pilgrim Gospeller?

Taking over from there, Finian McLonergan displays the pot of gold, which he has stolen; buries it in a plot of ground, which he has purchased; humanizes the un-human Og, which isn't easy; and marries his Sharon to her Woody, which is . . .

"If This Isn't Love" they're singing. . . .

Find as Finian

In the cast, which is perfect, Ella Logan is tops, projecting a

rounded, well-considered character as she sings and dances. What, all on her own, she does to "How Are Things in Glocca Morra" is memorable. And good show-business, too!

Albert Sharpe, imported for the purpose, is a find as Finian. He brings skill, humor and good old Celtic charm to the rainbow's owner. And David Wayne, as the leprechaun without a pot to wish on, is what the librettists must have dreamed of.

Donald Richard, graduate of "Winged Victory," is a becoming new-style song-and-dance show hero. His duets with Miss Logan—"Old Devil Moon" and "If This Isn't Love" in particular—are happy high spots of an unusually high-spirited evening.

Elsewhere among the players are Anita Alvarez, whose Susan Mahoney is elegant and eerie; Robert Pitkin, whose white-into-black Senator Billboard is brilliant and bitter; and Dolores Martin, whose "Necessity" is a song hit to remember.

But suffice it now to say that "Finian's Rainbow" will be at the 46th Street Theatre for a real long time and I'll go into Jo McIner's stunning settings, Eleanor Goldsmith's handsome costumes and Michael Kidd's extraordinary choreography later on . . .

This is a rave review. It should be!

"Finian's Rainbow"—continued

NEW YORK
Herald Tribune

JANUARY 11, 1947

By HOWARD BARNES

Leprechaun Meets Senator

THE tricky field of musical fantasy is explored in "Finian's Rainbow" at the Forty-sixth Street Theater. A leprechaun rubs shoulders with a Senator. Billboard Rawkins in a place called Mississippi in this antic collaboration by E. Y. Harburg, Fred Saldy and Burton Lane. There are touches of social satire, enthusiastic dancing, a song number or two to remember and not a little trying humor in the show. With Albert Sharpe, David Wayne, Ella Logan, Donald Richards and Anita Alvarez zealously performing in the principal roles and several excellent ensem-

ble numbers, the production has rewarding moments. What is chiefly wanting is the pace and sustained mood without which the central jest goes rather badly lost in the shuffle.

Harburg and Saldy have chosen a neat notion for their libretto. An Irishman and his daughter wander into Rainbow Valley in Mississippi with a crock of gold which the old man has "borrowed" from the leprechaun. The magical powers of the pilfered treasure have the bigoted senator turn black, a dumb girl speak and turn miserably share-croppers into happy folk. What with an over-size leprechaun tailing Finian and obvious allusions to the buried gold in Fort Knox, there is matter for joyous lampoon in the production. Unfortunately, a deal of time is spent in routine exposition and outhouse jokes. It is the dancing and singing which make "Finian's

Rainbow" moderately beguiling, for all the fine promise of its book.

The Lane score is scarcely arresting, but it has such lulling solo numbers as "How Are Things in Glocca Morra?" sung with quite a thick burr by Miss Logan, pretending to be a colleen: "Look to the Rainbow," a duet in which Richard helps no end and an elegant ensemble called "When the Idle Poor Become the Idle Rich." The music never fails the dancers, with Anita Alvarez doing individual feats and a first-rate chorus doing its stuff with easy grace. Wayne has his musical interludes, particularly in "Something Sort of Grandish" and the Negro trio. Robert Pitkin, Jerry Law and Lorenzo Fuller has rare fun with "The Begat." The vocal arrangements by Lynn Murray deserve special mention.

Miss Logan has the major as-

ignment in the piece, out she is less successful in keeping it infused with vitality than Sharpe, a new-comer to Broadway from Dublin, and Wayne. The former as Finian, has all the sense of comic timing which the show itself so often lacks. Wayne handles the leprechaun part with true brilliance, giving an index of what a wonderful melodic fable "Finian's Rainbow" might have been with better writing and direction. Robert Pitkin plays the senator with proper over-emphasis and Sonny Terry has a remarkable bit with a harmonica. The costumes by Eleanor Goldsmith are fancy enough to carry a whole scene and Jo Mielziner, who appears to be decorating all of the new shows, has created pleasant backgrounds for the nonsense. Bretteville Windust's direction, as already hinted, is labored. Nothing could be worse with a song and dance fantasy.

"Street Scene"

Journal American

JANUARY 16, 1947

'Street Scene' Bows At Adelphi Theatre

By ROBERT GARLAND

Eighteen years ago this very night a play called "Street Scene" by a playwright called Elmer Rice had its first production on a New York stage. The theatre was The Playhouse. The producer was William A. Brady, who controlled the showshop in which the premiere took place.

Burns Mantle, official play-picker to the American public, put it first among the season's best. Not to be outdone, the Pulitzer Prize people honored it with their dubious award. It ran for 601 performances, which is 2,381 less than "Tobacco Road."

Now, "Street Scene" is again in town. At the Adelphi it is a "dramatic musical" with book by Mr. Rice, lyrics by Langston Hughes, music by Kurt Weill, costumes by Lucinda Ballard, dances by Anna Sokolow, setting by Jo Mielziner, direction by Charles Friedman.

And, although I am not sure how a "dramatic musical" differs from, say, a "musical drama," I know that, with the addition of Mr. Hughes' lyrics and Mr. Weill's music, "Street Scene" provides an always interesting, frequently moving, evening in the theatre.

A different evening, certainly, even if its various elements—

drama and melodrama; comedy and tragedy; songs and dances—fall somehow to synchronize into an inspired harmonic whole.

Tale of a Slum

Writing reportorially, my major disagreement with this Elmer Rice-Langston Hughes-Kurt Weill collaboration is that it never manages to make up its mind about what it wants to be. Or, if I know what I mean, perhaps there is no American designation for "opera comique."

At any rate, the tale the storyteller set out originally to tell—a tumultuous tale of birth, life, love and death in a mid-Manhattan slum on a midsummer night and day—still dominates the undertaking. Especially in the second stanza, songs and dances get in the way.

Even in a "dramatic musical," this ought not to be. Instead of hindering, Mr. Hughes' lyrics and Mr. Weill's tunes should help the steady progress of Mr. Rice's narrative. This, I fear, they do not always do. Ever so often, they halt the advancement of the play.

Langston Hughes' are not too worthy words for the more worthy

melodies Kurt Weill has written. Because they are not, the vibrant drama Elmer Rice here assembles gives the impression of brushing them off as boy loves girl, husband kills wife and a baby is being born...

On the other hand, those more worthy tunes Kurt Weill composed are apt to demand attention on their own, not as an integral, if melodic, part of the musical drama "Street Scene" aims to be.

Amusing Septette

Even so, you will be hearing the amusing "Ice Cream" septette; the "Wrapped in a Ribbon and Tied in a Bow" the entire company sings; the "Moon-Faced, Siarry-Eyed" the young folk dance breathlessly; the "Catch Me If You Can" the children take over as their own.

Kurt Weill, remembering his "Mahogany" and "Three-Penny Opera" days, has supplied a score which stands—too—frequently, maybe—on its own. And it is sung for all it is worth by Norma Chambers, Norman Cordon, Sydney Rayner and the gifted Nikes of them.

It is well acted, too, especially by Sheila Bond and Danny McGuinn. In the boy-loves-girl assignment, Brian Sullivan and Anne Jeffreys are melodiously lovelorn.

As home grown "opera comique," or whatever the American equivalent may come to be called, this be-lyric-ed and be-music-ed "Street Scene" is not unexciting theatregoing fare, although I am sure it suffers by being neither drama, musical-comedy nor out-

"STREET SCENE"

A dramatic musical play from the play by Elmer Rice; music by Kurt Weill; book by Elmer Rice; lyrics by Langston Hughes; directed by Charles Friedman; scenery and lighting by Jo Mielziner; costumes by Lucinda Ballard; dances by Anna Sokolow; musical director, Maurice Abravanel; musical arrangements and orchestrations by Kurt Weill; presented by David Davis, Wiman and the Playwrights' Company at the Adelphi Theatre, Thursday evening, January 16, 1947. The cast: Abraham Kaplan, Irving Kaufman, Greta Florentino, Helen Arden, Carl Olsen, Wilcox Smith, Emma Jones, Hope Emerson, Olga Olsen, Norma Chambers, Shirley Kaplan, Norma Chambers, Henry Davis, Creighton Thompson, Willie Maurrant, Peter Griffith, Anna Maurrant, Polyna Stoka, Sam Kaplan, Brian Sullivan, Daniel Buchanan, Renee Lota, Frank Maurrant, Norman Cordon, George Jones, David E. Thomas, Steve Barker, Lauren Gilbert, Lippe Florentino, Sydney Rayner, Jennie Hildebrand, Beverly Jania, Second Graduate, Neeta Grueszka, Third Graduate, Marion Covey, Mary Hildebrand, Juliana Gallagher, Charlie Hildebrand, Bonnet Burrill, Laura Hildebrand, Kim Laha, Grace Davis, Helen Ferguson, First Policeman, Ernest Taylor, Rose Maurrant, Anne Jeffreys, Harry Easter, Don Scann, Mae Jones, Sheila Bond, Dick McGuinn, Danny Daniels, Vincent Jones, Robert Fiebold, Dr. John Wilson, Edwin G. O'Connor, Officer Harry Murphy, Norman Cordon, A. M. Brown, Russell George, A Music Pupil, Joyce Carrol, City Marshall James Henry, Randolph Symonette, Fred Cullen, Paul Lilly, An Old Clothes Man, Edward Reichert, An Interlocutor, Ray Meneault, An Ambulance Driver, John Sweet, First Nursemaid, Peggy Turner, Second Nursemaid, Ellen Carlson, A Married Couple, Bette Van, Joseph H. Beaudor.

SYNOPSIS: The action takes place on a sidewalk in New York City. ACT I: The evening in June. ACT II: Scene 1: The following morning. Scene 2: Afternoon of the same day.

and-out grand opera...

Under Maurice Abravanel's busy baton, the orchestra works wonders with the Kurt Weill score and orchestrations. But now, as 18 years ago, any award "Street Scene" may receive is definitely Elmer Rice's.

New York Post

JANUARY 10, 1947

Elmer Rice's 'Street Scene' Is Not Helped by Music

By Richard Watts Jr.

Elmer Rice's famous play, "Street Scene," represented a kind of historic peak in the drama of sheer, meticulous realism. Within the limits of its school of studiously detailed simulation of the actual, it achieved virtual perfection. From its grimly naturalistic setting of a cheap apartment house on the West Side to its sharply realistic representation of janitors, taxi drivers, milkmen and stage hands, it captured a startlingly accurate stage approximation of the real thing in the most convincingly melodramatic terms. It became a sort of landmark in the American theatre.

It was no doubt inevitable that a drama so steeped in the naturalistic tradition of the modern stage should present an irresistible challenge to such an adventurous man of the musical theatre as Kurt Weill. To transform something that fitted perfectly within the frame of photographic realism into a violently contrasting pattern of melody and rhythm must have seemed delightfully tempting to all of those concerned with the musical drama based on

"Street Scene," which opened at the Adelphi Theatre last night.

Now that I have seen and heard it, however, I am not sure that the feat was worth attempting. "Street Scene" was close to unforgettable in its original and completely suitable incarnation. As what its producers call "a dramatic musical," it is something less than that. I realize that all those who try fresh approaches to a triumphant work from "Hallelujah" to "Carmen" face great hazards on an even larger scale, and have been successful. But I must call the current reincarnation unsatisfying.

Care and Talent

The task had been approached with much care and considerable

talent. Mr. Weill has written music that is more concerned with capturing the proper mood than with being exhibitionistic. Langston Hughes' lyrics are carefully and often strikingly in the manner of the play. Both the plot and the spirit of Mr. Rice's drama have been adhered to loyally, and the setting and acting are painstakingly patterned after the original. There can certainly be no question of the musical version's fidelity.

It may, as a matter of fact, be too faithful for its own good. At least, the current "Street Scene" is certainly at its best when it forgets about its loftier ambitions and gets around to being a good Broadway musical show, proud and unashamed. Its lighter numbers, the song of the apartment-house gossips, the dance of the house trollop and her young man, the gay song of the girl graduates, the games of the children, are delightful. Indeed, all the dances staged by Anna Sokolow are fresh, amusing and winning.

In the dramatic scenes, though, the whole thing falters, and to a great extent that is a tribute to the continuing theatrical power of Mr. Rice's play. I cannot help thinking, for example, that the emotional effect is hampered, rather than heightened, when the realistic narrative goes into song. For me all the effect that the dramatist has achieved when the maddened stage hand, who has

just killed his wife and her lover, is being dragged away by the police is hastily dissipated as the stricken daughter rushes up to him and starts singing: "Why did you do it?"

Music and Lyrics

If the music and lyrics were brilliant and imaginative it is conceivable that even the meticulous realism of "Street Scene" might make as stirring a modern musical drama as "Carmen Jones." Since, however, they are decidedly more earnest and intelligent than impressive, the general effect is neither dramatic nor musically satisfying.

All of the performers have been well chosen, although they are naturally more effective in their singing than in their acting. Anne Jeffreys as the daughter, Polyna Stoska as the murdered mother, Norman Cordon as the homicidal husband and Brian Sullivan as the studious Jewish neighbor are successfully in character, particularly when they sing. Somehow, though, I was happier with Hope Emerson as the chief gossip, Sheila Bond as the dancing trollop and Beverly Janis and Juliana Gallagher as merry though dispossessed neighbors in the less serious episodes.

The musical "Street Scene" is an adventurous endeavor without the creative lift necessary for complete success.



JANUARY 10, 1947

'Street Scene' Has Opera Touch

By WILLIAM HAWKINS

Its producers have billed the new version of "Street Scene" as a dramatic musical. As a matter of fact it is even more an opera than an operetta, and an intensely interesting one.

Only brief passages are spoken. All the dramatic moments and most of the atmospheric material are unfolded to music, either richly vocal or through a liberal use of recitative.

The essence of the show is Kurt Weill's score. It is a difficult one for anyone but a musician to evaluate on first hearing.

Runs Gamut of Music

The numbers run a gamut from a down-to-earth modern dance tune, "Moon-faced, Slavery-eyed," to a septet as rich and full as if it had been written by Verdi and called, oddly enough, "Ice Cream."

There is a catchy rhythmic item, "Wrapped in a Ribbon and Tied in a Bow," which will undoubtedly be popular. There are passages that sound like background music

for a moving picture, and opulent melodies in operetta style. The first act has a gay quartet in comic opera style, and the second has a trio of ominous grandeur.

Same Dramatic Background

This complicated musical tapestry retains the spirit of Elmer Rice's original play, for the essential interest is always the neighborhood, with its complicated threads of feeling and friction.

The dramatic nucleus of the show is as before, the story of a surly stagehand, whose wife has an affair with a milk collector, and who kills them both. The double murder is the only real incident in the show.

The rest is atmospheric. These are modest people, some gay and contented, some frustrated and yearning. The group in the apartment house is gossipy, as people living in such proximity always are. Unwittingly they are cruel to the wife, who alone of them reaches out for romance.

Familiar neighborhood figures, the postman and delivery boy appear, and strangers pass down the block. Children's voices at games have a musical ring from down the street. It is earthy detail, gay or sad to the ear.

Reaches Terrific Peak

Through it there is spun out the ominous threat to the transgressing wife, which reaches a terrific peak in the ensemble immediately following the murder.

The daughter of the dead woman resolves her romance to a piteous reprise of the romantic melodies. Then the neighborhood settles down to its original complaint about the heat, as a new tenant appears to rent the apartment where the tragedy took place.

Polyna Stoska literally stopped the show last night a couple of times, and well deserved to.

Hers is a remarkable voice anywhere, and she has a talent for tonal characterization which is es-

sential to the role of the cheating wife. Her nostalgic aria about her life is delivered with infinite feeling and a free soaring vocal treatment that gives it a thrilling emotional quality.

Again in the tender song to her son, Miss Stoska animates the whole picture of the hemmed-in woman. She is not heard enough. Norman Cordon gives an intensely real portrait of the domineering and drunken stagehand.

Musically he is less fortunate than most of the others. The trio with his wife and daughter is effective. But in his final and most moving number, heavy orchestration and the ensemble singing leave his bass tones too often undistinguishable.

Anne Jeffreys' Voice Pleasing

Anne Jeffreys makes a lovely and tender daughter of the ill-matched pair. Her voice warmed as the evening progressed and was at its best in the more dramatic numbers.

Sydney Raynor does a ringing job of leading the "Ice Cream" number, and is practically never heard again. Brian Sullivan is a rich voiced beau of the daughter, and Hope Emerson is excellent as the gossip, as also is the singing Helen Arden.

A show-stopper is the dance of Sheila Bond and Danny Daniels, a number of daring and ingenious design.

"Street Scene," despite its glowering trend and undulating mood, is an experience to be mullied over and remembered.

"Street Scene"—continued

DAILY NEWS

AY, JANUARY 12, 1947.

Musical 'Street Scene' a Splendid And Courageous Sidewalk Opera

By JOHN CHAPMAN

From Elmer Rice's bitter and compassionate drama, "Street Scene," Mr. Rice, Langston Hughes and Kurt Weill have made a moving, remarkable opera—a work of great individuality which makes no compromise with Broadway formula. It was presented last evening at the Adelphi by Dwight Deere Wiman and the Playwrights' Company, and it was sung and acted by a top-flight company.

The authors call their work a dramatic musical, but it may well be called a metropolitan opera—a work that catches in both score and story the feel of tenement house life. As was the play, it is set before a shabby warren into which are crowded the races, the

lovers, the haters and the big and little events of city life. It is a grim Knickerbocker holiday.

Mr. Rice's story, so far as I can judge, remains intact. It tells of Sam Kaplan and Rose Maurant, who are most tenderly in love—tenderly but, caught up by tragedy and imprisoned by poverty, with little hope. It tells of Rose's drunken father and of her gentle, affection-starved mother, and of the father's two murders. It is packed with the incidents of a night and a day on a steaming New York sidewalk.

Score a Story Itself.

Mr. Weill and Mr. Hughes have made this story into music and lyrics—excellent lyrics and richly colored, effective music. The score is no pushover to sing and no pushover to hear; it is, like the play it follows, a dramatic narrative. Mr. Weill has chosen to hew to the line and let the hits fall where they may.

I doubt if there are any hits in the juke box-radio sense, but there are some fine songs—songs of tenderness, of longing, of heartbreak and of humor; big songs like "Somehow I Never Could Believe," extraordinarily touching ones like "A Boy Like You," wry and cynical numbers like the lullaby two

nurses sing to their infant charges as they gawk and gossip at the murder scene. The nearest thing to a musical comedy number is "Moon-Faced, Starry-Eyed," a jitterbug interlude delightfully sung and danced by Sheila Bond and Danny Daniels.

Fine Performances.

Mr. Weill's music matches the Rice story and the Hughes lyrics mood for mood, exhibiting a considerable range of style and being splendidly orchestrated by the composer. The drama moves inexorably toward the commission of the murders and the score sweeps right with it, building to a tingling climax.

The large company gives many fine performances. Polyna Stoska as Mrs. Maurant, Norman Cordon as the evil Maurant, Anne Jeffreys as their daughter and Brian Sullivan as Sam Kaplan carry the major vocal and acting burdens quite magnificently. Among those who contribute their vivid and often amusing bits to "Street Scene" are Hope Emerson, Lauren Gilbert, Sydney Rayner, Robert Pierson, Beverly Janis and Remo Lota. And a number of children make a rowdy passel of tenement brats.

"Street Scene" is a far from ordinary event in the theatre, and I salute the courage, imagination and skill of those who have made it.



JANUARY 12, 1947

Kronenberger

'Street Scene,' Set to Music Is Still Lively Theater

PM Reviews

Whatever may be wrong with the musical version of *Street Scene*, there is one thing overwhelmingly right: it thoroughly interests you. Whether the pulse that beats through it is quite that of the original play, or even that of New York's harsh, hectic, humane tenement life, there is a pulse of some kind. It manages to key you up; and even when there are things to carp at, the critic in you keeps deferring to the playgoer. For me at least, *Street Scene* is the first effective musical of the season.

In the Broadway sense, *Street Scene* is not, to be sure, a musical at all. It is captioned a "dramatic musical" (it could just as easily have been captioned a folk opera) and on just such lines has it been composed. Kurt Weill has sought

to achieve in music the atmosphere, the tensions, the theatrical values of the play—to express rather than merely embellish Elmer Rice's scenario. Curiously enough, though the evening is in general a success, Mr. Weill's music, judged by its precise intentions, is partly a failure. Mr. Weill is a very accomplished musician, who can brilliantly orchestrate as well as compose; but the strictly operatic side of *Street Scene* is musically not very rewarding. Some of it seems rather pretentious, and some of it as facetiously florid as movie music. Moreover, Mr. Weill has given musical expression to a good deal of fairly casual dialogue; nor has this taken the form of low-pitched recitative. It is pitched much higher, and the pulsant music sometimes collides with the prosaic

words to the point of bathos. Going by results, *Street Scene* would have been better off had some things that are sung been spoken.

Yet, though the operatic side of *Street Scene* often has a dubious operatic value, it is not without theater value. Mr. Weill's choral effects, in particular, heighten things dramatically. There are moments, too—when the orchestra is lightly counterpoised against spoken dialogue—that are strangely touching. And Mr. Weill has been quite successful with most of his lighter music—the jazzy *Moon-Faced, Starry-Eyed*, the comic *Lullaby*, the mock-operatic septet called *Ice Cream*, a lilting little nothing called *Wrapped in a Ribbon and Tied in a Bow*. The tunes are not hit-tunes, but they have a genuine appeal of their own.

To a considerable extent, however, it is the sturdiness of Mr. Rice's famous play that gives life and interest to these proceedings. Combining all the surface detail of New York street and tenement life with strong human-interest melodrama, *Street Scene*—though it was nothing more—was highly expert theater. In the present version, its elements are less well balanced than in the earlier one; the hurly-burly melodrama gets more attention than the hurdy-gurdy color. But as a musical, it builds better this way, even if it broadens less, and has much the same impact it

had as a play, though not all the humanity. Or, of course, of the novelty. Still, characters that seemed so flat flat Thursday night, such as the old Jewish socialist and the nervously expectant young father, fell rather flat for me 18 years ago.

Langston Hughes lyrics are, I suspect, deliberately simple—sometimes to their advantage, sometimes at the cost of prosiness. Anna Sokolow has devised some likeable street dances, as well as a striking toughie-and-shut number in which Sheila Bond and Danny Daniels wear themselves to a victorious frazzle. As for the cast, its acting is surprisingly good considering it must have been chosen for its singing. As the ill-fated Mrs. Maurant, Polyna Stoska brings a warm and beautiful voice to Broadway. There is good singing, too, by Anne Jeffreys as her daughter; and by Creighton Thompson, Norman Cordon, Brian Sullivan and others. Charles Friedman has directed with a feeling for pace and variety, and for handling crowds; things move without a hitch. Jo Mielziner has designed a new tenement set that seems as effective as his famous original one, and Lucinda Ballard has done right by the costumes. *Street Scene* is not all it should be as folk opera. But it certainly stands up as a musical theater-piece.

—LOUIS KRONENBERGER

"Street Scene"—continued

NEW YORK
Herald Tribune
JANUARY 18, 1947

By HOWARD BARNES

Bravo!

ELMER RICE'S "Street Scene" has finally been put to music and the result is an uneven, but generally exciting folk opera. The new show at the Adelphi can even claim a certain kinship with George Gershwin's classic, "Porgy and Bess." Dwight Deere Wiman and the Playwrights' Company like to term their production "a dramatic musical," but it is no ordinary song and dance concoction. The Elmer Rice libretto, Kurt Weill's score and the Langston Hughes lyrics are fused in a melodic melodrama, with pas-

sages of recitative punctuating the solo and ensemble numbers. Since the singers, although relatively unknown in the theater, are superb, and the acting is brilliantly defined, "Street Scene" is different and sometimes wonderful.

If it falters, it is because the Weill music is uneven in texture. At times the composer has evoked the full magic of the drama in operatic terms, as in the lovely "Somehow I Never Could Believe," the rug-cutting "Moon-Faced, Starry-Eyed" number, "A Boy Like You," or the sardonic "Lullaby," in which nursemaids tell their charges to hush—your father is a lush. Hughes has not failed his collaborator in the best numbers. The gifted poet has been almost too intent on telling a story in many instances. The prose poems clarify a simple plot about infidelity and various ructions in

a New York sandstone tenement apartment house, but one might wish for more lyrical imagination. The pull of the show is strong, but it is sporadic.

It is somewhat curious that it took two decades for some one to accept the challenge of converting a celebrated dramatic pastiche of Manhattan to musical terms. The present sponsors have not only accepted it; they have gone about their job meticulously. In Polyna Stoska, who sings the role of the errant wife and mother, they have discovered a rare artist for the theater. Her voice is controlled and infinitely appealing. Her acting lacks nothing. Anne Jeffreys, as the tortured daughter who becomes an unwitting victim of an explosion of jealousy and murder, is excellent, while Hope Emerson, Norman Cordon, Sydney Rayner and Brian Sullivan round out the vocalizing with tremen-

dous effect, even to enraging in an octette.

Here is a modern opera which is not to be dismissed lightly. With Jo Mielziner's documentary setting framing the action, "Street Scene" has an electric theatrical quality which has been too often wanting this season. Don Saxon and Sheila Bond contribute one of the fragments of dancing in the work with "Moony Faced, Starry-Eyed." It might have been better had they interrupted the recitatives more frequently. There is a gay children's dance number called "Catch Me If You Can" to further emphasize the lack of true New York side-street atmosphere. On the whole "Street Scene" is something to see. Charles Friedman has staged it with movement and color and little commotion and Lucinda Ballard has dressed it appropriately. It may not be a "Porgy and Bess," but it is a stimulating entertainment.

The New York Times

JANUARY 18, 1947

THE PLAY

By BROOKS ATKINSON

Add to the text of Elmer Rice's "Street Scene" a fresh and eloquent score by Kurt Weill and you have a musical play of magnificence and glory. Sung by a superb cast, it opened at the Adelphi last evening. Eighteen years ago Mr. Rice's ballad of a dingy side street in New York rose high above the horizon of the theatre, and it has always remained there as a cherished masterpiece. For nothing else has recaptured so much of the anguish, romance and beauty of cosmopolis.

Now Mr. Weill, the foremost music maker in the American theatre, has found notes to express the myriad impulses of Mr. Rice's poem and transmuted it into a side-walk opera; and Langston Hughes

has set it to affectionate lyrics. Mr. Weill's record includes some notable scores for "Johnny Johnson," "Knickerbocker Holiday" and "Lady in the Dark." But obviously this is the theme he has been waiting for to make full use of his maturity as a composer.

For he has listened to the main street cries of Mr. Rice's garish fable—the hopes, anxieties and grief of people trying to beat a humdrum existence out of the squalor of a callous city. The main theme he has conveyed in the rueful wonder of the song Mrs. Maurrant sings in the summer moonlight—"Somehow I Never Could Believe"; in her daughter's romantic lament—"What Good Would the Moon Be?"; in the janitor's brooding song and in the horror-stricken choral entitled "The Woman Who Lived Up There." In these songs, and in the ominous orchestrations that accent the basic moods of the drama, Mr. Weill is writing serious music evoked by the excitement of New York.

But he is a Broadway virtuoso

with a love for the trivia as well as the grandeur of his theme. For relish of life in the streets there is nothing more enchanting than his tone poem to ice cream and his gay dance for the street urchins. As a poet Mr. Hughes also relishes the people whose lives spill out of packed buildings on to the pavements. His lyrics communicate in simple and honest rhymes the homely familiarities of New York people and the warmth and beauty of humanity. Acting as popular song writers, as well as artists, Mr. Weill and Mr. Hughes have tossed off one down-beat hot number, called "Moon-faced, Starry-eyed," to which Sheila Bond and Danny Daniels dance a superb American apache number that outranks any of the current show tunes on Broadway.

Not long ago the local managers were complaining that they could no longer find actors who could sing. The producers of "Street Scene" have had no such troubles. They have found superb singers who have helped to make this one of the memorable nights in the-

atre going. Polyna Stoska, who plays Mrs. Maurrant, has a brilliant soprano voice that contains both the sadness and sweetness of the part. As her daughter, Anne Jeffreys sings and acts with equal beauty. Norman Cordon conveys in his baritone singing the violence and silliness of Mr. Maurrant.

There is an abundance of fine singing all through the play—Creighton Thompson as the janitor, Brian Sullivan as the restless law student, Irving Kaufman as the amusing Jewish intellectual. Hope Emerson is vastly entertaining as the garrulous old crone; and Peggy Turnley and Ellen Carleen ably sing the tabloid lullaby.

Jo Mielziner, who designed the celebrated setting for the original production, has designed another of lighter texture—the garishness more sympathetically stated. And perhaps this is something of what the opera contributes to the old drama. With its music and dances, its chorals and lyrics, it finds the song of humanity under the argot of the New York streets.

The Sun

JANUARY 18, 1947

'Street Scene', Offered at the Adelphi, Impressive in New Musical Form.

By WARD MOREHOUSE.

Elmer Rice's poignant and multitudinous drama of the sidewalks of New York, called "Street Scene" when fondly presented by Bill Brady eighteen years ago and still bearing that title, was done as a musical play last night at the Adelphi Theater. I found it to be highly impressive in its new form.

"Street Scene," now actually a folk opera, is brought along by the amiable Dwight Deere Wiman, making his return after a considerable absence, and the Playwrights Company, and it's pleasant to welcome the showman from Moline (Ill.) with a

favorable report on the evening's proceedings.

Kurt Weill has written a vigorous score for "Street Scene" and Rice's story, retaining a great deal of its vitality, is again told with Jo Mielziner's dingy brownstone front serving as a

backdrop. Life flows from the doors and windows of that grim, drab tenement just as it did in 1929. Weill has written some good songs—"The Woman Who Lived Up There," "Moon-Faced, Starry-Eyed," "Wouldn't You Like to Be on Broadway," "Ain't It Awful, the Heat?"—and Wiman and the Playwrights Company have somehow found the people to sing them.

There is fine vocal work from Norman Cordon, Anne Jeffreys, Polyna Stoska and Brian Sullivan as Rice's tale of the unfaithful wife, murdered by her jealous and drunken stagehand husband, is unfolded to the music of Weill, to the lyrics of Langston Hughes, and to the musical direction of Maurice Abravanel.

Miss Jeffreys, playing the daughter in the tenement house of tragedy, sings enchantingly and is acceptable dramatically. Norman Cordon brings a towering physique and a fine voice to the role of the husband, sullen

with drink, tortured by suspicion, and turned suddenly into a madman with a gun. There is some wonderful jitterbug dancing from Sheila Bond and Danny Daniels and a charming nursemaid song is contributed by Peggy Turnley and Ellen Carleen. It is in this number that the Hughes lyrics are shown to greatest advantage. The sharpest characterization of the evening is that of the ample Hope Emerson as a wry, dry and gabbling tenement dweller.

Much of the spirit and flow of the populous original production has been caught in the direction of Charles Friedman, and there were moments last night when I wished that the drama could have gone along unimpeded by song. Lucinda Ballard has again come up with effective costumes.

The blending of Kurt Weill's music with Elmer Rice's sound realistic drama provides Broadway with a new and highly creditable production. "Street Scene" is worth seeing.

"The Big Two"



JANUARY 18, 1947

Kronenberger

A Boy-Meets-Girl Solution To the Russian Problem

PM Reviews

To be as kind as possible to *The Big Two*, credit it with trying in its tiny way to promote better relations between the United States and the Soviet Union. At bottom, the play is not much more serious than it is successful, and in any case its thesis, that sex is mightier than State Departments can hardly be tested on a large enough scale to count. But at least it may be said of *The Big Two* that it is on the side of international amity.

It may be said, but only, I fear, by way of epitaph. As a play, *The Big Two* is a shoddy and straggly mixture of comedy, corn, melo-

drama, romance and political talk—a thrown-together affair that is constantly falling apart. It is a pure back job that gives a topical slant to one of the oldest of stage situations—that of the man and the girl who are divided on every count save love.

The man is a Soviet officer, the girl an American newspaper correspondent. They meet in a hotel in Russian-occupied Austria. They are, both of them secretly, and the girl illegally, looking for the same man—an American traitor who broadcasts for the Nazis. For a while they clash violently over ideologies;

then, suddenly, they are purring with love. But when the girl confesses that she is trying to catch the traitor, her beau appears to put duty sternly ahead of love, and some tepid melodrama ensues. At the end, however, there is both a personal and a political *entente cordiale*.

Though *The Big Two* is sheer formula stuff, that is hardly why it comes off so badly. It could never have amounted to anything at all important, but done right it might have been entertaining and stimulating in a popular way. But the authors, even on the political side, keep diluting truth with trash, keep alternating a line that is meant to sink in with a line only meant to go over. And on the theater side, *The Big Two* is simply incompetent. Most of the writing is flimsy enough, but most of the playwriting is even flimsier. Indeed, for an act and a half *The Big Two* is nothing but talk—and far from lively talk. And when it gets round to spurts of action, it is scarcely livelier. Actually its best moments concern the minor characters in the play, guests at the hotel who hold your interest now and then.

To make matters worse, Claire

THE BIG TWO

Play by L. Bush-Fekete and Mary Helen Fay, adapted by Robert Montgomery; scenery and lighting by J. J. Mielziner; costumes by Blanka Stroock; presented by Elliott Nugent and Robert Montgomery, by arrangement with David Branson, at the Booth Theatre Wednesday evening, January 8, 1947.

The cast:
Karl—Martin Berliner
Mabel—Edward Franz
Capt. Pat McClure—Robert Scott
Gwendolyn—Wanna Paul
Danielle Forbes—Claire Trevor
Moser—E. A. Krumpholtz
Wirth—John Banner
Fatschek—Oleg Fabian
Capt. Nicholas Montgomery—Philip Dorn
Franklin Sawyer—Olga Fabian
Mr. Kullback—Michele Toulman
Guests—Phil Miller, Ella Rieth, Kenneth Dobbs, Fred Loran, Louis Brannetti
Russian Soldiers—Mars Hamilton, Walter Palanca, Charles Ross Jr.

SYNOPSIS—The place: The lobby of the Waldorf in Baden, within Russian-occupied Austria near Vienna. The Time: November, 1944. Act I—Late afternoon. Act II—Scene 1: Next morning. Scene 2: Evening of the same day. Act III—Thirty minutes later.

Trevor is exceedingly unskillful as the American girl, so that even Philip Dorn's very competent performance as the Russian can't sustain the one important relationship in the play. There is some pleasant enough acting of minor roles by Felix Bressart, Edouard Franz, Olga Fabian and E. A. Krumpholtz; sound enough direction by Mr. Montgomery; and a nice set by Jo Mielziner.

—LOUIS KRONENBERGER

New York Post

JANUARY 9, 1947

'Big Two' Is in Favor of Love As Russo-American Solution

By Richard Watts Jr.

The new play that Elliott Nugent and Robert Montgomery brought to the Booth Theatre last night is a comedy of international good will, and it is, therefore, not to be dismissed abruptly. In a day when so many ugly forces make for almost anything else, even a slight theatrical contribution to a sympathetic understanding between Americans and Russians deserves not only respect but gratitude. To this extent, "The Big Two" by L. Bush-Fekete and Mary Helen Fay, merits approving consideration.

Let off the more ungracious aspects of this report a little longer, it may be noted that the new comedy has two things to say of real importance. When the Russian captain, who is its hero, tells the American newspaper woman, who is its heroine, of his progress in life from the early years of the revolution, when he was one of the homeless and hungry waifs that civil war left in its wake, it is reminding us, who are so likely to overlook

such things, of the great constructive side of Soviet achievement. Then, when the cringing Austrians, of dubious Nazi background, cry out for the pity and support of easy-going Americans, it is recalling the widespread extent of the conspiracy to split the victorious Allies in the interest of Fascist recovery. Such points can hardly be made too frequently.

Effective Scenes

Unfortunately, good will and a couple of effective scenes are about the only commendable features that "The Big Two" has to offer. It does not make up for its dramatic defects through the

straightforward editorial intensity of what it has to say, as in the manner of that more skillful journalistic play, "Temper the Wind." It merely makes its valuable points in a few scattered episodes and spends the rest of its time in commonplace comedy and unexciting drama.

The story it has to tell is of an American girl journalist—not one of these star feature-writing prima donnas of the late "Love Goes to Press," but a young woman who makes herself strangely ingratiating by admitting that her politically-powerful uncle got her the job and that she has trouble getting her stuff printed—who sneaks into the Russian zone in Austria to look for a radio broadcasting American traitor hiding out there. At the hotel she meets a handsome and serious-minded Russian captain, who has his susceptible side.

First, of course, the two splendid representatives of two great nations are pretty scornful of each other, and indulge in harsh criticism of their opposing ideologies. Then they get to understand each other better, and, despite a second-act conflict, they come to the conclusion that to love is to understand quite a lot about national and social differences.

Hidden Traitor

The melodrama, if you can call

the mild excitement aroused by such a name, comes from the attempt to discover the identity of the hidden traitor. My own interest was kept at a minor pitch by a morbid suspicion that, even if the fellow were captured and brought back to America, he would soon be released with an apology, and I was interested to find that the Russian captain shared my guess on the matter. Anyway, the result of the hunt is not astonishing.

A considerable part of the comedy consists of a scornful contemplation of the postwar activities of several disreputable black-marketeers. These unpleasant gentlemen are amusingly enough studied, but neither their adventures nor the romantic complications of Russo-American love succeed in being more than momentarily diverting.

Claire Trevor, of the movies, doesn't succeed in making the American girl particularly interesting or persuasive, but Philip Dorn, of Holland and Hollywood, is excellent as the Russian. Edouard Franz, always a good actor, is of help as an equivocal character, and Felix Bressart is genuinely amusing as one of the black market boys. Mr. Montgomery's direction is lively and alert. But "The Big Two" has chiefly its commendable intentions to support it.

Journal *and* American

JANUARY 9, 1947

'The Big Two' Bows At Booth Theatre

By ROBERT GARLAND

The truth is that a bad play meets up with a bad performance at the Booth Theatre. And results are as bad as bad plus bad can be. The bad play is "The Big Two," perpetrators of which are L. Bush-Fekete and Mary Helen Fay. The bad performance is that of Claire Trevor, one of the piece's pair of stars.

According to Who's Who in the Cast, printed in 45th st. programs, Miss Trevor has been lured out of the golden Hollywoods and onto the Broadway badlands by two such knowing showmen as Elliott S. Kent and Robert Montgomery. In an arrangement with a small-type Mr. Bramson, they're co-producers of her play.

From the road, on which Miss Trevor's creaky vehicle eluded itself in readiness for last night's arrival, word came that "The Big Two" was anti-American—or something. Truthfully, it isn't. The sole subversive thing to be said about it is that it's definitely—and disastrously, I fear—anti-theatre.

So anti-theatre is "The Big Two" that the motion-pictures have already paid \$100,000 for it, with \$150,000 more to come.

Look What's Coming

Close your eyes and visualize "The Big Two" as, a while from yesterday, it will return to town.

This time it too, will come from the golden Hollywoods to break another record at a Broadway temple of the movies. And in glorious Technicolor, with Miss Trevor really letting herself go in what will be her 67th picture.

Then, as now, the locale will be the lobby of the Waldhotel in Austria's Baden-Baden. The mean old war is over. The nice young Russians are at hand. And an amorous American beauty is devastatingly at large, with gowns by Hattie Carnegie, coiffures by that fellow from the Ritz, nylons by Jessie Zimmer and pearls by La Touche.

And by-lines by the Associated Press. For, whether on its present stage or some future screen, Miss Trevor impersonates a luscious Lady of the Press, a Mae West-like Member of the Fourth Estate who gets her story even as she gets her man. At the Booth, her man is Captain Nicholas Mosgovoy, whose Communism has its sexy side.

Miss Trevor, working on Comrade Mosgovoy, is like a cut-down copy of Miss West working on Comrade Stalin. But funnier!

Look What's Here

Well, for three acts and an extra

scene, the prior-to-Hollywood version of "The Big Two" goes on and on hard by the Shubert Alley. Half of the cast speaks German. Half speaks Russian. And one solitary left-over American corporal speaks the fine familiar language known as Brooklynese. He's Robert Scott, still in uniform.

It's tough on the players, this "new comedy." For playwrights and producers demand less of them than they're in a position to bestow. As Comrade Mosgovoy, Miss Trevor's gentleman-of-the-evening, co-star Philip Dorn does his actorial worst to show that there's nothing quite as soft as a hard-boiled Russian egg.

But, in spite of Hollywood's cash and Hollywood's Claire Trevor, everything about "The Big Two" is so empty and artificial that I doubt if Lynn Fontanne and Alfred Lunt could make Danielle Forbes (that's Miss Trevor) and Nicholas Mosgovoy (that's Mr. Dorn) seem anything but foolish, faked and prematurely two dimensional.

Mr. Melisner's single setting may be better than Mr. Montgomery's singular direction, but "The Big Two" remains stubbornly the little one. Southern California, take it away.

New York World-Telegram

JANUARY 9, 1947

'The Big Two' a Timely Thriller

By WILLIAM HAWKINS.

Rarely does a play make good sense about a vital subject in such entertaining terms as does "The Big Two." It tells about Russia and America trying to get together.

Demands are made on both parties. Each is asked to contribute nothing more trite or less eternal than patience, understanding, compromise and faith.

This signboard toward better than a phony suspicious peace expresses itself as a delicious romance and a clever thriller, woven with threads of tragedy and high comedy.

If a theatrical mince pie occasionally threatens, the ingredients are mixed with a light balance.

Highly Entertaining.

There is simplicity about the play's wisdom, and a splendid cast sustains a highly entertaining evening.

Near Vienna an American newspaperwoman enters the Russian-occupied zone on a questionable pass. She has a tip on the hiding place of a surviving Lord Haw Haw who is still broadcasting.

A Russian officer comes on leave to the family hotel where she is and they are mutually attracted. In a delightfully surprising love scene she admits her purpose and he reports her.

Personalities Problems.

She discovers the culprit before he does. But it is the reaction of each of them to the complicated position they are in that gives the play its hopeful final lift.

The play may seem an elementary comment on a vastly devious problem. The important thing is that it personalizes the familiar quarrels in terms that should affect the reaction of the most remote onlooker.

When the girl condemns the

Russian for the seizure of plumbing fixtures he reminds her how difficult it was to bathe in Stalingrad. When she berates him for lacking individuality he describes his orphaned childhood, when the state could supply only six pencils for 150 pupils and the child owned nothing but his own line.

It is a startling challenge to hear a Viennese explain that to his people the American is God, because he is so rich and so remote. And a moving twinge comes with the violinist's eager chattering of all the agencies and their addresses in New York which may help her find her sister.

Shed Pathetic Disguises.

Some of the play's highest comedy comes in the interrogation scene, yet it is simultaneously moving to see these little conquered people shed their pathetic disguises.

Claire Trevor is as much at ease

as if she had left the stage for films a month instead of a dozen years ago. In her relaxed picture of the journalist she is regular without being tough or smart aleck.

She manages to throw away an awkward line and speed up a scene that is too pat. In the approach to the love scene she gets little help from her lines, but gives them a breathless reading that leaves no doubt as to what is happening to her.

Philip Dorn is excellent as the Russian officer. He has the uncompromising aloofness, the cut and dried morality, yet he imbues the character with innate charm. It is a handsome, cold surface taught to cover a most human interior, and he welds the contrast into a believable and suspenseful figure.

A Black Marketeer.

Felix Bressart gets all the comedy possible from the wily little procurer now engaged in black market or any other kind of trading. And Eduard Franz does a smooth job of keeping the part of the innkeeper properly negative.

John Banner has authority and humor to bring strength out in the role of the ill-fated critic and E. A. Krumschmidt offers some expertly touching pantomime.

Mr. Montgomery's direction occasionally prescribes action purely for the sake of motion, but it certainly keeps the play on its toes.

"The Big Two" is no classic, but it is timely and healthy and easy to understand.

"The Big Two"—continued

NEW YORK
Herald Tribune

JANUARY 9, 1947

— By HOWARD BARNES —

Full of Small Holes

IT WOULD be pleasant to report that two notable gentlemen of the stage and screen, Elliott Nugent and Robert Montgomery, had hit the jackpot with their production of "The Big Two." They have assembled a first-rate company for the L. Bush-Fekete-Mary Helen Fay comedy at the Booth. Montgomery has staged it with proper theatrical emphasis against a handsome Jo Mielziner setting. The fact remains that a show which should have been loaded with laughter and meaning emerges as a stuttering and trite entertainment. The old Mittel-

Europa atmosphere of romance, intrigue and uniforms has been brought up to date in a post-war set-to between an American newspaper woman and a Russian captain in Baden a year or so ago, but it was scarcely worth the effort.

The authors, in what appears to have been a curious collaboration, have mixed fact and fancy as indiscriminately as a cockeyed chef trying to make sauce Bernaise. At intervals one gets the notion that they have been intent on giving antic illumination to relations between the U. S. A. and the U. S. S. R. There is a lot of talk about ideologies at variance. There is considerable sledge-hammering away at the idea that Americans and Russians get along together fine when given the chance. The trouble is that the drama's structure has no more stability than one

of those glass-top arrangements of toothpicks. The characters do not force the issue in "The Big Two." The piece yanks them around in rather preposterous postures.

Claire Trevor and Philip Dorn play the leading roles with a good deal more vitality than they deserved. The former, as a woman correspondent who tries to find a traitorous American broadcaster behind the iron curtain of a Russian-occupied zone, brings a brittle skepticism to the part which is very right indeed. Dorn, in his first Broadway stage appearance, demonstrates that he has the stuff of a matinee idol in the role of the Ukrainian army officer who dates his birth from his tenth year when he came under Soviet discipline. His romantic encounters with the lady journalist are certain to titillate feminine theater-goers. When he is asked to

recount some jokes that would have a hard time setting by on the radio, he is merely bowing to the demands of a bad play.

Several other accomplished mummies become entangled in tedious scenes. Felix Bressart, from the films, has some humorous business as a black-market operator in Baden, but it is mostly of his own contriving. Eduard Franz is quietly authoritative as the myopic hotel proprietor, whose broadcasts bring lovely lady and dashing officer together in new Austria. The others struggle along, not quite certain whether they are interpreting a significant chapter in the history of the Allied occupation, or having to go it without music in an operetta libretto. "The Big Two" gives hints as to why Nugent and Montgomery wished to put it on a stage, but they do not add up to a satisfactory bit of theater.

The New York Times

JANUARY 9, 1947

THE PLAY

By BROOKS ATKINSON

Trust the Broadway theatre to solve intricate problems with the greatest of ease! While Russian and American diplomats tremble over our jangled relations, two playwrights solve everything in the course of one evening by introducing a female American correspondent to a dashing Red Army officer. The playwrights are L. Bush-Fekete and Mary Helen Fay, heretofore charged with authorship of "Embezzled Heaven" and "Alice in Arms." Their Russo-Yankee solution is entitled "The Big Two," which was put on at the Booth last evening with Claire Trevor and Philip Dorn establishing good international relations.

Although their solution is not novel in a theatre haunted by the memories of Civil War melodramas, it still works on Broadway when two hearts beat as one. Danielle Forbes, another one of those enterprising and glamorous was correspondents, chisels her way into the Russian occupation zone of Austria to put the bite on a traitorous American radio broadcaster. Captain Nicholas Mosogovoy, of the Russian N.K.V.D., turns up at the same hotel on the same mission. When boy meets girl, every American playgoer knows what to expect and is seldom disappointed.

To tell the truth, "The Big Two" flounders around during the first half of the evening while the authors set the stage amid the wreckage and flotsam of a Baden post-war hotel. The passionate American correspondent, in a snug evening gown, and the proud Russian soldier, in his dashing uniform, also argue some pretty fierce politics before they get down to business.

But once Capt. Nickolai Mosogovoy and Danielle Forbes struggle

into each other's arms, "The Big Two" scampers through the rest of an interesting evening of cop, robbers and romance. For Mr. Bush-Fekete has had a long training in Continental romance with the assistance of deferential hotel-keepers and obsequious servants; and presumably Miss Fay knows "The Blue and the Gray" tradition. Put together the best features of both, with a touch of movie direction in the staging, and you have an evening's entertainment.

Score something also in favor of ardent love-making on the stage. As the irresistible war correspondent, Claire Trevor is handsome and animated. And Philip Dorn is tall and handsome as the Red Army swain, and he is also an actor of uncommon poise and good taste. Your attention is respectfully directed to the love scenes which mean business.

From the academic point of view, it is a little distracting to have in one play so many random parts to be acted in irrelevant

styles. But in "The Big Two" this has the advantage of offering a little gem of an emotional scene by Olga Fabian, who wrings out of it all the poignancy of a war victim.

Felix Bressart and E. A. Krum-schmidt contribute several comic vignettes as odd characters pinching livings out of a ruined country. Eduard Franz gives an ably relaxed and knowing performance as the keeper of a hotel in Baden. Matching the stage direction to the script, Robert Montgomery has put together a lively performance with some of the virtues of a certified Hollywood product.

Celebrating the conclusion of the war, Jo Mielziner has designed an inviting Baden hotel lobby where before you know decaying tourists will be taking the cure again. In the meantime, the authors of "The Big Two" have provided the pleasantest solution yet to the current estrangement between Russia and America. Love conquers all, including an anxious and trumpy playscript.

that he is only human after all, even if he is a Commy. I guess there is a message in this.

For this production Messrs. Elliott Nugent and Robert Montgomery have assembled enough accents to make a playgoer wish he had boned up at the Berlitz School for a few weeks before buying his ticket. Some of the actors talk German. Others talk Russian with a German accent. One talks what she thinks is English English. The heroine talks American to little avail.

Claire Trevor is the one with the American accent. Philip Dorn plays the Russian officer with a German accent. Eduard Franz portrays the renegade American, Felix Bressart is put in for comedy as an Austrian black market operator, Jo Mielziner designed the setting—which is a hotel lobby—and Mr. Montgomery directed.

Not any of them is any better at his job than the authors have been. Despite the best intentions on the part of all concerned, "The Big Two" remains a minor mistake.

DAILY NEWS

JANUARY 9, 1947

'The Big Two' a Flimsy Comedy About Love and Peace and Stuff

By JOHN CHAPMAN

A few nights ago it was "Love Goes to Press," about two female newspaper correspondents running the war in Italy. Last evening at the Booth Theatre it was "The Big Two," about one female newspaper

correspondent winning the peace in Austria. I wish playwrights would lay off my racket, which is the newspaper business, until such time as they learn something about it.

I further wish that Ladislav Bush-Fekete and Mary Helen Fay, the authors of "The Big Two," would lay off writing any more plays until ditto.

In their little piece they tell of

an intrepid girl reporter who comes into the Russian-occupied zone near Vienna in search of a renegade American who did propaganda broadcasts for the Nazis during the war. If she finds him she will have a "scoop" for her paper.

A Human Russian.

She finds her man, does this babe, but first she encounters a fearsome Russian officer and in the course of three acts she discovers

"The Big Two"—continued

The Sun

JANUARY 9, 1947

'The Big Two,' at Booth, Haphazard Mixture of Just a Little of Everything.

By WARD MOREHOUSE.

Elliott Nugent and Robert Montgomery, two showmen who learned about the theater the hard way, as Broadway actors, returned to town as producers last night, putting on "The Big Two" at the Booth. The results are not so good. Their play is a haphazard and unsettled mixture of romantic comedy, political preachment and frenzied melodrama.

The authors, L. Bush-Fekete and Mary Helen Fay, have spun together a love story and a discourse on international relations, particularly those between America and the Soviet Union, and only in their melodramatic moments do they create a measure of excitement. "The Big Two" is

lagging theater in its first act, declamatory drama in its second, and rather a confusing blend of everything in its third.

The Booth's new play, going its uncertain and discursive way, tells its tale of the meeting of an attractive woman correspondent (American) and an Army captain (Russian) in the Russian-occu-

pied zone of Austria, near Vienna, in November of 1945. Both are in quest of a foul American, one Elmer Stone, who has been broad-casting for the Nazis and who is wanted for treason.

The girl and the officer get into conflict on ideology and on points of view, but their sharp political differences do not prevent their falling in love, just as speedily as hero and heroine have been doing ever since "Secret Service," and "Hawthorne of the U. S. A." Before they're done they take care of the case of Mr. Stone and, incidentally, of United States-Russian relations.

Now, coming to the matter of the acting in "The Big Two," I fear that Claire Trevor, definitely at a disadvantage in being assigned a B-picture role, is quite miscast as the adventure girl out to track down the enemy commentator. When Miss Trevor left New York for the West some seasons ago she was a promising ingenue, and it's now quite apparent that her

stage training has been neglected. She returns to give a performance that is a blend of something out of old-time melodrama and "The Perils of Pauline."

Philip Dorn is considerably better as the Russian captain who is no match for the press girl from the States. He has force and authority and a good deal of charm—and he also has a better written role. Felix Bressart manages to wring some comedy and distress from the part of a black market operator. Eduard Franz gives a satisfactory performance, as he always does.

"The Big Two" has been costumed by Bianca Stroock, encased in good scenery by Jo Meizner, and staged for movement—quite a lot of movement—by Robert Montgomery. It is a play with a few effective moments, but they are far too few. It's more of a scrambled screen scenario. "The Big Two," than it is a satisfactory or straightforward play.

"Love Goes to Press"

DAILY NEWS

JANUARY 2, 1947

'Love Goes to Press,' or, 2 Lady Authors Cover the Italian Front

By JOHN CHAPMAN

Martha Gellhorn and Virginia Cowles, the authors of "Love Goes to Press," have made an occasionally animated comedy of what might instead have become a picture-magazine layout titled "Life Goes to a Party at the Italian Front."

The correspondents inhabiting a press camp at Poggibonsi in the Winter of '44 are caught in various poses—working, playing and making love—in a play which is quite friendly and pleasant, although I do not regard it as another "Front Page" or "Clear All Wires."

Maybe it could be, with more tense direction—but I doubt if George Abbott and George Kaufman together could flog a bunch of comedians into bucking last night's first audience at the Biltmore. That crowd was a gem of dejection; it did not look as though it had a holiday hangover but it

acted so.

Over from London,

"Love Goes to Press" was first produced with some success in London and several of the company have come over with the play.

Among them are Joyce Heron, who plays an American girl correspondent convincingly and charmingly, and Ralph Michael, who has a Leslie Howardish look about him and is a good actor. A third is Georgina Cookson, whose broad playing of a blonde actress "doing her bit for

the boys" is pretty funny.

The story plotted by Mmes. Gellhorn and Cowles is vagrant but amiable and it contains some nice, catty remarks. It concerns two girl correspondents who are much more serious about their work, except, maybe, the P. R. O. (Mr. Michael) than the men are. Yet, aside from trying to sneak through the German lines or attempting a flight to Poland, they manage to find time for love, and one of them finds her ex-husband in the clutches of the actress.

What a War!

In addition to the visiting actors listed, one should mention the genial work of William Post Jr. as the reporter who nearly gets hooked by the actress, the attractive intensity of Jane Middleton as his wife and the easy performance of Don Gibson as a girl

'LOVE GOES TO PRESS.'

Play by Martha Gellhorn and Virginia Cowles; directed by Wallace Douglas; settings designed by Raymond Beery; costumes by Emeline Rocha; presented by Warren F. Munsell and Herman Bernstein at the Biltmore Theater Wednesday evening, January 1, 1947.

The cast:

Leonard Lightfoot	Gerald Anderson
Tex Crocker	David Tyrrell
Hank O'Reilly	Warren Parker
Joe Rogers	William Post Jr.
Major Philip Brooks-Jervaux	Ralph Michael
Corporal Crump	Peter Bonaselli
Daphne Rutherford (E.N.R.A.)	Georgina Cookson
Jane Mason	Joyce Heron
Annabelle Jones	Jane Middleton
Major Dick Hawkins (U.S.A.A.F.)	Don Gibson
Captain Sir Alastair Drake	Nigel Neilson

SYNOPSIS: Act I—Allied Press Camp, Poggibonsi. Late afternoon. Act II—Scene 1—A storeroom, Press Camp. The next morning. Scene 2—Press Camp. Early afternoon the same day. Act III—Press Camp, the following morning.

struck flying officer.

I'll have to accept the word of the authors that a press camp was like the one they present in World War II, even though it seems to be the press room at police headquarters, Chicago, circa 1928, except for the Italian architecture.

It must have been quite a war, girls—and if that is the way it was covered—for us slackers back home I want back all the money I spent on newspapers.

"Love Goes to Press"—continued



JANUARY 3, 1947

Kronenberger

War Correspondents At Work and Play

PM Reviews

Having covered the war, Martha Gellhorn and Virginia Cowles have now gone on to cover the war correspondents. Their milieu is a press camp in Italy in 1944; their mood a skylarking one, part comedy, part satire. Neither part comes off well, nor do the two parts come together as anything that could be thought of as a play. No doubt it's the old story of the authors having themselves too high a time to leave much over for the audience. Except for a bright moment here and

there, *Love Goes to Press* is a good deal of a bore.

The thing that's supposed to make everything bounce into action is the arrival on the highly masculine scene of a couple of American women correspondents—and an affected ENSA actress. To help make the comedy boil, the prim British public relations officer is a gent who loathes having women around, while one of the male correspondents is the ex-husband of one of the female ones, as well as the actress's

fiance. Nor are the ladies of the press mere hard-working dames who take risks and score beats; they are veritable glamour girls who can break a stony heart as easily as they break a tough story. Any relation between them and the authors of the play, moreover, is possibly not just coincidental. One writes, after all, about what one knows best.

Well, soon enough one of the girls has the public relations officer madly in love with her; while the other has won back her former husband, who happens to be a heel, from the actress. But neither lady is altogether happy with her conquest, and shortly before the end both of them are headed away from the altar. But at the very end we learn that all concerned will, to their surprise, be meeting again soon in Burma—with consequences I don't mind being left in the dark about.

When romance isn't cluttering up the scene, the authors seek to have fun at the expense of some pretty sloppy American correspondents

and some pretty stuffy British ones. Very little time is allotted to the war itself—that being, no doubt, a mere incident compared to the great and eternal War Between the Sexes that engrosses the two ladies. I have no quarrel with that; I only wish Miss Gellhorn and Miss Cowles had made it interesting. I wish, too that, since they hadn't much in the way of a plot, they had sweated a little harder over their dialogue. Between facile brightness and real wit there's as much difference as between a hairdresser's dummy and a real woman. Facile brightness, in fact, can be a lot more wearisome than ordinary unvarnished talk.

Love Goes to Press ran for a while in London last year, and the two best performers in the current production have been imported from the original one, Ralph Michael plays the public relations officer with a good deal of skill, and Joyce Heron is attractive as the gal he falls in love with. The rest of the mixed English and American cast is strictly routine.

—LOUIS KRONENBERGER

New York Post

JANUARY 2, 1947

The Italian Campaign of 1944 Seen as a Romantic Frolic

By Richard Wetts Jr.

Martha Gellhorn and Virginia Cowles, two ardent and attractive young women who have been seeing a lot of wars in the last decade, have written a very girlish play about the lady war correspondents. It was presented last night with a cast half of which also played it in London recently, and the truest and most cutting thing that can be said about the work is that it is worthy of the B-movie title bestowed upon it, which is "Love Goes to Press."

The new comedy is, I am sorry to say, rather a dismal event, but at least it reveals one quite remarkable achievement on the part of the two playwrights. They have managed to make the Italian campaign of the winter of 1944 a kittenish, musical-comedy affair. The only realistic thing I could find about the play is that its foreign correspondents talk sentimentally about the world capitals and distant lands they are always visiting.

If "Love Goes to Press" reveals

its authors in one of their unhappiest and least convincing phases, it likewise shows them in one of their less self-effacing moods. The play is certainly not autobiographical in the frank manner employed by Ruth Gordon in her "Years Ago," but the two handsome girl journalists, one blonde and the other brunette, who are its heroines can hardly be thought of as purely imaginary figures. And the playwrights certainly do admire them.

Two Heroines

In fact, you would have to search the theatre quite a long

while before you encountered two heroines more enthusiastically depicted. They are good-looking, brilliant, phenomenally successful, irresistible to men, beloved by all who know them, and generally devastating. It can hardly be said that the men of the play are good enough for them.

According to the authors, although the male war correspondents and the public relations officers in Italy were by no means worthy of their heroines, the girls were graciously tolerant of them. The tolerance, however, does not extend to an English actress who unwittingly finds herself near the front and lacks their careless courage in the face of danger. They don't like her at all and they don't mind who knows it or what your guesses are likely to be as to her identity.

Anyway, it is all in the spirit of a great big lark. Although the heroines are angelic, they are also gay, humorous, flirtatious and always ready to parachute down behind the enemy lines in Poland or Yugoslavia whenever a properly impressed Air Force officer takes them for a spin across Europe. The male correspondents are just spoiled boys, ever ready for a frolic or a joke on the PRO, and the public relations officers, while gruff and officious, are splendid fellows at heart.

Off to Burma

Chiefly the dim plot has to do with the brunette journalist's troubles with the dashing cad of a correspondent, who was her husband, and the blonde journalist's wooing by the PRO, who thinks he hates women at the front but never fools anyone. In the end they are all rushed off to the front in Burma, where I don't think General Stilwell would have welcomed any of them. It is to be prayed that the authors do not think of Lillian Hellman and write a sequel about the Rover boys and girls in the CBI theatre.

There is one excellent performance in the course of these foolish proceedings. Ralph Michael as the British public relations officer with the heart of gold contributes an attractive and remarkably believable characterization to a play that is neither attractive nor believable in any other respect. Joyce Heron offers a pleasant impersonation of the blonde correspondent and Georgina Cookson satirizes the visiting actress heavily but amusingly. The going is a little too hard for the others.

The well-known capabilities of the two playwrights and the potential interest of their subject matter make the ineptness of "Love Goes to Press" particularly sad.

"Love Goes to Press"—continued

NEW YORK
Herald Tribune
JANUARY 2, 1947

— By HOWARD BARNES —

Won't Stop the Presses

TWO women war correspondents are having a fine welcome for themselves in "Love Goes to Press." The new comedy at the Biltmore is the work of Martha Gellhorn and Virginia Cowles, who know what they are writing about. Its description of press camp doings in Italy during February, 1944, is authentic to the last detail. Occasionally it has moments of dramatic excitement and amuse-

ment. Unfortunately the authors have been so intent on creating glamorous autobiographical sketches that the general effect of the show is wearisome.

The timing is not felicitous for "Love Goes to Press." When the piece was done in London some time ago with several members of the present cast, the war was still close enough to make the adventures of a pair of feminine reporters worthy of extended discussion. The mere fact of the girls' presence at the front undoubtedly served to spark a trifling romantic comedy. The spark is very feeble now, while the faults of the dramatic structure are thrown into high relief. Aside from their comments on the Italian campaign

and war reporting, the authors have little to say of profound or humorous significance.

They have not failed to make their two lady correspondents extremely attractive. One tangles with a British actress who is entertaining the troops in a mink coat and wins hands down. The other performs the extraordinary feat of winning over a prim British major, whose idea of running a press camp is to keep all women away. Between them they make one think that it might have been a mistake to have had any men reporters covering the war. If only their little victories had been more amusingly recounted, "Love Goes to Press" would have justified the frequent promise which it has.

The acting is up to all the demands of the script. Ralph Michael, who has come on from England for the opening, is extremely good as the stuffy major who is not above romantic persuasion. Joyce Heron is excellent as the more level-headed of the correspondents and Jane Middleton does a nice job with the companion role. Georgina Cookson plays the British actress with rather too much malicious emphasis and William Fox Jr. and the others serve chiefly as background for the heroines. Wallace Douglas's staging is on the stolid side. The Raymond Sovey settings are fine. "Love Goes to Press" is realistic, but trying.

The Sun

JANUARY 2, 1947

'Love Goes to Press' Is a Scanty Comedy About Two Women War Correspondents.

By WARD MOREHOUSE.

The drama didn't advance last night. "Love Goes to Press," brought over from England by Warren P. Munsell and Herman Bernstein and put on at the Biltmore, is a struggling and straggling little comedy, one of the weakest of the West End exhibits to come along in quite a while.

Martha Gellhorn and Virginia Cowles, both of whom had a whirl at war correspondence, have written a play of two dauntless girls on the Italian front. One is offered the rural

peace of marriage in Yorkshire by a British major, Public Relations Officer, who comes under her spell, and the other takes up with a former husband and there is talk of a blissful trip to Capri.

But there is a craving for adventure in the blood of Jane Mason, the blond beauty representing the New York Bulletin, and in that of the brunette Annabelle Jones, a go-getter for the San Francisco World. And both walk out on romance for more war reporting—this time in Burma.

"Love Goes to Press," according to a sound and well-traveled observer who saw it abroad, was rather amusing fare in its London presentation. But last night at the Biltmore the comedy

dragged along interminably. There are a few agreeable moments in the Gellhorn-Cowles play—these are supplied by Joyce Heron and Ralph Michael—but most of the scenes are overwritten and long-winded.

Miss Heron, making her first appearance in the New York theater, plays easily and charmingly as the girl who softens the very tough P. R. O. at the Allied Press Camp, Poggibonsi, Italy, as of February in 1944. Ralph Michael, also on a Broadway stage for the first time, is excellent as the major. Peter Bennett gives a likable performance as Corporal Cramp. Raymond Sovey has contributed two good settings.

"Love Goes to Press," a scanty and frequently tiresome comedy, gets 1947 off to a bleak start theatrically.

The New York Times

JANUARY 2, 1947

War Correspondents Debunked at the Biltmore in Gellhorn-Cowles Comedy 'Love Goes to Press'

By BROOKS ATKINSON

Being in an irreverent frame of mind, Martha Gellhorn and Virginia Cowles have started debunking war correspondents in "Love Goes to Press," put on at the Biltmore Theatre last evening. That should be a fruitful field for post-war debunking, since it bred more overnight experts than any other department of journalism and raised up a crop of demons for personal service.

Since both the authors saw considerable service as war correspondents in hot as well as relaxing areas, they know the racket, as

well as a few of the most celebrated operators whom they satirize. But this playgoer is bound to confess that "Love Goes to Press" is not the cartoon that two frisky artists ought to draw of the typewriter soldiers. As the title indicates, they waste most of the evening on some dull and profitless love affairs.

When the curtain goes up the situation looks promising. For the stage contains a pair of raffish American correspondents playing cards and filching news from a serious-minded Britisher who sees

the war "in the round." There are also promising irritations in progress between the correspondents and the public-relations officer, who dislikes having others using his typewriter and who likes travel orders, discipline, organization and other tiresome military details.

There is also some promising description of the prerogatives of visiting female correspondents who look down their powdered noses at jeeps and borrow the general's personal car. Something amusingly acrid is said about the bridling and bravura of an English entertainer who pops in amid a swirl of mink to sing to the troops. But unfortunately those are only bright flashes in a fairly routine story about affairs of the heart that need not detain you this morning.

Since "Love Goes to Press" was produced in London it retains some of the best features of the British Army manners, which were always

a source of wonder to the squalid Americans. Take note of Ralph Michael's neat, crisp acting as the correct yet human P. R. O.; Peter Bennett's cheerful humanity as the orderly and Gerald Andersen's well-mannered aloofness as a British agency man. Georgina Cookson contributes a hilarious caricature of a singing entertainer to whom the whole war is one tumultuous and flattering theatre.

Against these glasses of fashion, the sprawling Americans are no better than their field prototypes, and that is a good thing for the theatre. As the two female correspondents, Joyce Heron, who comes from England, and Jane Middleton, who comes from "Made in Heaven," give competent performances of very busy roles. Raymond Sovey has designed and furnished one sufficiently morose room that serves as the P. R. O. headquarters.

But love will have to fly out the window when the real satire of war correspondents gets written.

"Love Goes to Press"—continued

New York World-Telegram

JANUARY 2, 1947

'Love Goes to Press' Puts Girl Reporters on Spot

By WILLIAM HAWKINS.

The authors of "Love Goes to Press," both of whom were war correspondents, have done their trade no favor in this new play. The Lamour girl journalists here depicted are vain, demanding and inefficient.

Criticism of them by officers would appear to be most justified. They talk a lot about "covering a war," and doing a job for oppressed people and unsung heroes. In this play their chief accom-

plishments are to bungie assignments right under their noses, and behave like frivolous nitwits about men.

An Unlikely Plot.

The unlikely procedure of the plot might be acceptable if it were told with any wit, but the play is tedious and stale. The characters are amusingly glib. The jokes are based on ideas like standing in line to get into a bathroom, and

wearing funny hats.

Jane and Annabelle are the two efficient correspondents who want to tell the truth about the war in Italy. Jane makes a deal to get inside a mountain, billet that is being besieged. She loses her chance to a singer who is entertaining the troops. Then Jane sleeps through an attack, falls in love with a stern British officer, and walks out on him for a new assignment.

Tough on the Actors.

Annabelle arranges to fly into Poland. This is considered gallant and constructive, because she "knows the Poles." Her divorced husband tricks her out of the chance and steals her story. She has won him back from the singer but, like Jane, lights out for Burma with a general they know.

The cast has a tough time doing

anything with this group of snide characters. Jane Middleton makes Annabelle fairly believable and almost likable, but the play is against her. Joyce Heron as Jane makes this cynical demon of the

press artificial.

Ralph Michael, who reminds one of Leslie Howard, can do little more than make the public relations officer haughty and cranky. Georgina Cookson plays the utterly idiotic singer with affect, setting what laughs there are in the show with the obvious methods called for by the character.

William Post Jr. is Annabelle's competitive husband, and Don Gibson makes a pleasant simplification of a flier. Nigel Neilson does an ingratiating job of a brief role.

Not Very Amusing.

The antics of the brave and lovely ladies of the newspaper world during the war have been written up a good deal in the past. They are no longer amusing. It is doubtful in the case of this play if they ever would have been.

The authors could surely never have intended the message they put across in "Love Goes to Press." It comes out as a strong argument that a woman's place is in the home.

Journal and American

JANUARY 2, 1947

'Love Goes to Press' At Biltmore Theatre

By ROBERT GARLAND

Admitting again that there's no business like show business, the idea behind the song can be carried a bit too far. It's carried quite a bit too far in "Love Goes to Press," which started the New Year none too right last night at the Biltmore Theatre, from which "No Exit" recently departed.

Just why two such experienced showmen as Warren Munsell and Herman Bernstein found it advisable to bring all of last night's play able to bring all of last night's play the long way from London to New York is nowhere made manifest in Irving Berlin's lyric as sung nightly at the Imperial.

But bring them from London, where they divided an eight-week run between the Embassy and Duchess Theatres, to New York, where they're neighbors to "Years Ago" and "Cyrano de Bergerac" in 47th st., they did

Maybe Messrs. Munsell and Bernstein know something I don't know.

Or maybe they're just in error. Suppose Martha Gellhorn and Virginia Cowles have written "Love Goes to Press" out of their personal experiences as war correspondents in Italy, their ladies of the press seldom come to life and their gentlemen of the press even more infrequently...

And the World War they're in is merely a lark—with sex appeal!

Romantic Misconception

Their Jane Mason of the Bulletin and Annabelle Jones of the World, their Tex Crowder of Union Press and Hank O'Reilly of Alliance, their Leonard Lightfoot, Joe Rogers and Phillip

Brooke-Jervaux are no reportorial kind of folk, say, a Frank Conniff of an Ernie Pyle.

If we stay-at-homes are happily mistaken when we assume that there was something more to World War—corresponding than is displayed these nights up on the Biltmore stage, it's in me to wish that Martha Gellhorn and Virginia Cowles had left us alone with our romantic misconceptions.

As written by these ladies of the press turned ladies of the showshop, as projected by Joyce Heron and Jane Middleton under the direction of Wallace Douglas, Jane Mason of the East Coast and Annabelle Jones of the West are anything but admirable. Or lovable. Or funny.

And, along with Tex Crowder, Hank O'Reilly and Joe Rogers, their betroussed fellows, I imagine they're supposed to be all three. At any rate, one of the girls is torn between Joe, who hails from San Francisco, and the Phillip Brooke-Jervaux who is a Public Relations Major.

In the end, I think it is he who once more waits for baby!

British Invader

During an occasional scene between scenes when Jane and

Phillip are required to sit down and talk things quietly, Misses Gellhorn and Cowles write of 1944 with human and humorous understanding, and their sly bit about life in the English countryside is fresh and funny.

It's then that Ralph Michael, making his American stage debut by kind permission of England's Ealing Studios, Ltd., displays the skill and personality which constantly bring to mind the self-same qualities in the dear dead Leslie Howard. His is the evening!

From the London cast of "Love Goes to Press" are Joyce Heron as Jane Mason, Georgina Cookson as Daphne Rutherford, Gerald Anderson as Leonard Lightfoot and Peter Bennett as Corporal Cramp. Reading from left to right, I see no real reason for them to have made the voyage.

Of the Americans, William Post Jr. as Joe Rogers is the best out of three among the men, while Jane Middleton as Annabelle Jones is the best out of one among the women. But when "Love Goes to Press" comes to be remembered, it'll be as the vehicle for Ralph Michael's American stage debut

... Otherwise, it could and should and would have stood in bed in London!